SPURGEON'S SERMONS VOLUME 06: 1860

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's influential sermon collection on faith, grace, and spiritual living.

59 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 06: 1860

Chapter 1

Dilemma and Deliverance

A Sermon

(No. 287)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 4th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."--Psalm 9:10.

THERE ARE MANY MEN who are exceedingly well read in heathen mythologies; who can tell you the history of any one of the heathen gods, but who at the same time know very little of the history of Jehovah, and cannot rehearse his mighty acts. In our schools to this day there are books put into the hands of our youth that are by no means fit for them to read--books which contain all kinds of filth, and if not always filth, yet all kinds of fables and vanities, which are simply put into our hands when we are lads, because they happen to be written in Latin and Greek; and, therefore, I suppose it is imagined that we shall all the better recollect the wickedness that is contained in them, by having the trouble of translating them into our own mother tongue. I would that instead of this, all our youth were made acquainted with the history of the Lord our God. Would that we could give them for classics some books which record what he hath done, the victories of his glorious arm, and how he hath put to nought the gods of the heathen and cast them down even into the depths. At any rate, the Christian will always find it to be useful to have at hand some history of what God did in the days of yore. The more you know of God's attributes, the more you understand of his acts; the more you treasure up of his promises, and the more you fully dive into the depths of his

covenant, the more difficult will it become for Satan to tempt you to despondency and despair. Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. Meditate on his law both day and night, and thou shalt be like a tree planted by the rivers of water; thy leaf shall not wither; thou shalt bring forth fruit in thy season, and whatsoever thou doest shall prosper. Ignorance of God is ignorance of bliss; but knowledge of God is a divine armor, by which we are able to ward off all the blows of the enemy. Know thyself, O man, and that will make thee miserable; know thy God, O Christian, and that will make thee rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now, this morning, in addressing you, I shall divide my text into three parts. First, I shall note a certain fiery dart of Satan; secondly, I shall point out to you heaven's divine buckler, as hinted at in the text--"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee;" and then, in the third place, I shall notice man's precious privilege of seeking God, and so of arming himself against Satan.

I. First, then, I am to dwell for a little time upon A CERTAIN FIERY DART OF SATAN WHICH IS CONSTANTLY SHOT AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF GOD. There are many temptations, there are many suggestions and insinuations; and all these are arrows from the bow of the Evil one. But there is one temptation which exceeds all others, there is one suggestion which is more Satanic, more skilfully used in effecting the purposes of Satan than any other. That suggestion is the one referred to in these words of the Psalmist--viz., this, the suggestion to believe that God has forsaken us. If all the other arrows of hell could be put into one quiver, there would not be so much deadly poison in the whole as in this one. When Satan has used up every other weapon, he always betakes himself to this last, most sharp, moat deadly instrument. He goes to the child of God and pours into his ear this

dark insinuation, "Thy God has forsaken thee quite; thy Lord will be gracious no more."

Now, I shall remark with regard to this arrow, that it is one that is very often shot from Satan's bow. Some of us have been wounded by it scores of times in our life. Whenever we have fallen into any sin, have been overtaken by some sudden wind of temptation, and have staggered and almost fallen, Conscience pricks us and tells us we have done wrong. Our heart, like David's heart, smites us. We fall upon our knees, and acknowledge our fault and confess our sin. Then it is that Satan lets fly this arrow, which comes whizzing up from hell and enters into the soul, and while we are making the confession, the dark thought crosses our soul, "God has forsaken thee; he will never accept thee again. Thou hast sinned so foully that he will blot thy name out of the covenant; thou hast stumbled so fearfully that thy feet shall never stand upon the rock again--thou hast stumbled to thy fall; thou hast fallen to thy fell destruction." Have you not known this, Christian? When for a season you have been led to backslide, when you have lost your first love and have become degenerate, when you have put out your hand to touch the unlawful thing through some sudden surprisal--has not this been thrown in your teeth?" Ah, wretch that you are, God will never forgive that sin: you have been so ungrateful, such a hypocrite, such a liar against the Lord your God, that now--now he will cast you away, throw you upon a dunghill like salt that has lost its savor, and as fit for nothing." Ah, friends, you and I know what this means. And I dare say David did too. He had to feel all the power of this poisoned arrow after his great sin, when he went up to his chamber and wept and bemoaned himself, and there cried out in agony, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." A select opportunity this for shooting this arrow. Just where the sin has been Satan marks,

and then he sends a suggestion. Wherever there is a wound of sin, it is wonderful how this arrow will work, and what a burning it will give to our blood till every vein becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, and all our flesh is made to tingle with this evil thought, "I have sinned, and the reprover of man has reproved me to my face and cast me from his presence, and he will be gracious to me no more." Another season when Satan usually shoots this arrow is the time of great trouble. There is a broad river across your path, and you are bidden to ford it. You go in and you find the water is up to your knees. Anon, as you wade on it becomes breast-high. But you comfort yourself with this thought, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." Cheered with this you go on; but you sink, and the water becomes deeper still. At last, it is almost gurgling in your throat! it is flowing over your very shoulders. Just then, when in the very deepest part of the stream, Satan appears on the bank, takes out his bow and shoots this fiery arrow.--"Thy God has forsaken thee." "Oh," saith the Christian, "I feared not as long as I heard the voice saying, Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.' But now," saith he, "my God hath forsaken me." And now the Christian begins to sink indeed, and if it be not for the mighty power of God, it will not be Satan's fault if he doth not drown thee in the midst of the flood. What a malicious devil is this, that must always send us a fresh trouble, and most grievous of all, send it when we are in our very worst distress. He is a coward, indeed; he always hits a man when he is down. When I am up and on my feet I am more than a match for Satan, but when I begin to stumble through great trouble, out comes the dragon from the pit, and begins to roar at me, and to draw his sword, and hurl his fiery darts; for now, says he, "man's extremity shall be my

opportunity; now that his heart and flesh fails--now will I make a full end of him." You also know, some of you, what that means. You could bear the trouble well, but you could not bear the dreary thought that God has forsaken you in your trouble. Another season, too, in which Satan shoots this fiery dart is before some great labor. I am often vexed and perplexed with this dark thought when I have to appear before you on the Sabbath day; I frequently come here with that ringing in my ears:--"God will forsake thee; thou shalt fall before the congregation; the word shall not go home with power; thou shalt labor in vain, and spend thy strength for nought." Thousands of times have I preached the gospel, yet to this day does that same arrow come flying up, and still does it vex and perplex my heart. If there be anything greater for a Christian to do, than he has been accustomed to do in former times, it is generally then that Satan levels this battle, when there is a deep soil to be ploughed, and the plough it heavy, and the oxen are faint, and the ploughman thinks he shall not accomplish his weary work, then it is that up comes this dark thought--"The Lord hath forsaken thee, and where art thou now?" The like doth he do at another season, namely, times of unanswered prayer. You have been up to God's throne asking for a blessing; you have been five, six, twelve times, and you have had no answer; you go again; and you are just wrestling with God and the blessing seems as if it must come; but no, it does not come, and you bring your burden away on your back once more. You have been wont to cast all your cares upon God, and come away rejoicing; but now you find that prayer hath no return of blessing; it seems to be a waste of words. Then up comes Satan, just at the moment, and he says, "God hath forsaken you, if you were a child of God, he would answer your prayer; he would not leave you crying so long in the dark as this, if you were one of his beloved children. Why, he hears his people! Look at Elijah

how he heard him. Remember Jacob; how he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. Oh," says Satan, "God has forsaken thee." Ah, Satan we have heard that aforetime. "Yes, but," says he, "his mercy is clean gone for ever. The heavens have become like brass, the Shekinah is gone up from between the wings of the cherubim, his house is left empty and void; Ichabod is written on thy closet; thou shalt never have an answer again. Go speak to the winds, spread your griefs to the pitiless sea, for God's ear is shut, and he will never move his arm to work deliverance for thee."

Now, am I not justified in saying that this arrow is very often shot. I may not have mentioned all the instances in which it has been shot at you, but I am certain that if you are a child of God, there have been times and seasons when this desperate insinuation has come up from hell--"God hath forgotten thee: he hath cast thee off: thou art left to thyself, and thou shalt perish." At any rate, if you have never said it, remember it is written in God's word that Zion saith "My God hath forgotten me;" and call to your recollection that gracious answer "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." The arrow; then, is often shot.

Then let me remark with regard to this arrow, again that it is most grievous. Other troubles only wound the Christian's' flesh; they do but pierce with skin deep wounds; but this is a shot that goes right deep into his heart. When Satan is shooting other arrows we can laugh at him, for they rattle against our buckler; but this one finds out the joints of the harness, and it goes right through from one side to the other, till we are compelled to say, "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach one; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" This is hitting the target in the very center. This is skillful

riflery, indeed, when Satan is able to send this arrow right into the eve of the soul. Other troubles are like surface storms. They toss the ocean into an apparent storm, and there are big waves on the top, but all is still and calm down in the caverns beneath. But this dark thought makes the ocean boil to its very bottom; it stirs the soul up until there is not one place in which there is rest; neither a cavern of the heart, nor a corner of the conscience in which the spirit has peace. This arrow, I say, is one of hell's masterpieces, there is more craft and skill in it than aught else Satan has ever done. It is the worst of his arrows because it grieves the Spirit exceedingly. And there is another thought I must throw out. Not only is this arrow grievous, but it is very dangerous. For if, my brethren, we believe this accusation against God, it is not long before we begin to sin. Let the Christian know that his God is with him, and temptation will have little power, but when God has forsaken us, as we think that he has, ah! then, when Satan offers us some back door by which to escape from our troubles, how very easily shall we be tempted to adopt his expedients. A merchant who knows that his God is with him, may see trade going from him, and his house verging to bankruptcy, but he will not do a dishonest thing. But let him imagine that God is against him, then Satan will say, "See, merchant, one of God's children, you have been deceived, he will never help you;" and then, he is tempted to do something which in his conscience he knows to be wrong. "God will not deliver me," he says; "then I will try to deliver myself." There is great danger in this. Take heed to yourself then that ye "take unto you the whole armor of God," and "above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." I will make but one other observation upon this fiery dart; and that is, it bears the full impression of its Satanic maker. None

but the devil could be the author of such a thought as this--that God has forsaken his people. Look it in the face, Christian, and see if it has not got the horns of the Evil One stamped on its brow? Does not the cloven foot peep out? Look at it; why, it is the devil's own child.

Why, bethink thee, Christian, this Evil One is making thee doubt thy own Father. He is bidding thee distrust a faithful God. He is calling in question the promise which says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." He is making you accuse God of perjury. As if he could break his oath, and run back from the covenant which he has made with Christ on thy behalf. Why, none but the devil could have the impudence to suggest such a thought as that. Cast it from thee, believer; fling it away to the very depths of the sea; it is unworthy of thee to harbor it for a moment. Thy God forsake thee? Impossible! He is too good. Thy God forsake thee? It is utterly impossible! He is too true. Could he forsake his children, he would have forsaken his integrity; he would have ceased to be God, when he ceased to succor and help his own. Rest thou, then, in that, and ward the fiery dart off; for hellish, indeed, it is, and the name of its maker is stamped upon it legibly.

II. In the second place, let me notice THE DIVINE BUCKLER WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR HIS CHURCH AGAINST THIS FIERY DART. Here it is; it is the fact that God never has forsaken them that fear him, and that, moreover, he never will do so.

Ah, my brethren, if we could but once believe the doctrine that the child of God might fall from grace and perish everlastingly, we might, indeed, shut up our Bible in despair. To what purpose would my preaching be--the preaching of a rickety gospel like that? To what purpose your faith--a faith in a God that cannot and would not carry on to the end? To what use the blood of Christ, if it were shed in vain, and did not bring the blood-bought ones securely home? To what purpose

the Spirit, if he were not omnipotent enough to overcome our wandering, to arrest our sins and make us perfect, and present us faultless before the throng of God at last? That doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints is, I believe, as thoroughly bound up with the standing or falling of the gospel, as is the article of justification by faith.

Give that up and I see no gospel left. I see no beauty in religion that is worthy of my acceptance, or that deserves my admiration. An unchanging God, an everlasting covenant, a sure mercy, these are the things that my soul delights in, and I know your hearts love to feed upon them. But take these away, and what have we? We have a foundation of wood, hay, straw, and stubble. We have nothing solid. We have a fort of earth-works, a mud hovel through which the thief may break and steal away our treasures. Nay, this foundation stands sure--"The Lord knoweth them that are his;" and he doth so know them that he will certainly bring them every one to his right hand at last in glory everlasting.

But to return to our text, and to offer you some few words of comfort which may tend to quench the fiery dart of the wicked one. The psalmist says, "Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." I call up before you now, one by one as witnesses, the saints of God in the olden time. You are in great trouble to-day and Satan suggests that now God has forsaken you. Come hither, Jacob! we read thy testimony. Wast thou a man of trouble? "Ah," saith he, "few and evil were my days." Evil, man?--what meanest thou? "I mean that they were full of sorrow, full of perplexity, full of fear and trouble." And what is thy testimony, Jacob? We have heard that thou didst seek God in prayer. Didst thou not wrestle with the angel at the brook Jabbok, and prevail? Speak, man, and tell these doubting hearts, did God forsake thee? Methinks I see that hoary patriarch lifting up his hands, and he cries, "I trembled to meet my brother, Esau. I stayed at the brook Jabbok, and I said, Lord,

give deliverance from him whom I think bloodthirsty.' I crossed the brook full of fear and trembling, but tell it, O let it be known for the comfort of others in like trouble with me, I met my brother Esau, and he fell upon my neck and kissed me. He would not take the tribute which I offered him. He became my friend and we loved each other. God had turned his heart, and he took no vengeance upon me. But," continued the patriarch, "I was always a doubting man, I was always a careful man; I had so much cunning and craft about me that I could not trust anything in the hands of my Covenant God, and this always brought me into care and trouble. but," says he, "I bear my witness that I never had need to have troubled myself at all; if I had but left it all in the hand of God, all would have been well. I remember," saith he, "and I tell it to you now, when my son Joseph was sold into Egypt what sorrow I had in my heart, for I said, My grey hairs shall be brought with sorrow to the grave, for Joseph my son is, without a doubt, rent in pieces.' And then it happened on a day that Simeon was taken away from me; and there came a message out of Egypt that Benjamin must go down. And I remember well what I said Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now they will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.' But they were not against me," says the old man, "they were for me, every one of them. Joseph, that I said was not, was; he was sitting upon the throne; he had prepared for me a habitation in Egypt. As for Simeon, he was a hostage there; and that was not against me, for perhaps I should scarce have sent my sons down at all if it had not been for the hope that they would bring Simeon back. And now," says Jacob, "I retract every word I have said against the Lord my God, and I stand before you to bear my testimony that not one good thing hath failed of all that the Lord God hath promised. My shoes were iron and brass, and as my days so was my strength."

I hear a mourner say, "Mine is not a case of trouble and sorrow; mine is a case of duty. I have a duty to perform that is too heavy for me, and I am afraid I shall never accomplish it." Here comes another of the ancients to bear his witness. It is Moses; let him speak. "I thought," said he, "when God called me from keeping the flocks of my father in the desert by the mount of Horeb, I thought I never could be strong enough for the office to which I had been ordained. I said unto my Lord, who am I, that I should go unto Pharoah? And I said unto him again, Lord, thou knowest I am not eloquent; the children of Israel will not believe me, for I shall not have skill enough in oratory to persuade them to follow my words. But the Lord said, Certainly I will be with thee. And lo," says Moses, "as my days so was my strength. I had strength enough to stand before Pharoah, strength enough to shake the whole land of Egypt, and strength enough to divide the Red Sea and drown all Pharoah's hosts. I had strength enough to endure with an evil generation forty years in the wilderness, strength enough to take their idol god and grind it in pieces, and make them drink the water upon which I had strewn the atoms. I had strength enough to lead them on from day to day, to command the rock and it gushed with water, to speak to the heavens and they sent down the manna. And when I went up at last to my grave, and looked from the top of Nebo, I, who had once been fearful, saw with transport the land to which the Lord's people had been brought, and my soul was taken away with a kiss, and I departed in peace." Hear that, then, O laboring one; the God that helped Moses will help thee. Moses sought God, and God did not forsake him; nor will he forsake thee.

But saith another, "I am exposed to slander, men speak evil of me; no lie is too bad for them to utter against me." Ah, my friend, permit me to refer you to another ancient saint; it is the saint who wrote this

psalm--David. Let him stand up and speak. "Ah!" saith he "from the first day when I went forth to fight Goliath even to the end of my life I was the subject of shame and slander. Doeg the Edomite, Saul, and multitudes of men, the men of Belial, like Shimei, all accused me. I was the song of the drunkard; I was the harlot's jest. Nothing was too bad for David. All mine enemies went round about the city like dogs, that bay all night and rest not even at morning." And what didst thou do, David? "Oh," said he, "I said, My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.'" And didst thou prove that God was thy deliverer? "Ah, yes--yes," saith he, "I have pursued my enemies, and I have overtaken them.' Thou hast smitten all my enemies upon the cheek-bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.'" And so shall you find it, my hearers, God has not forsaken you, even though you be slandered. Remember it is the lot of God's greatest servants to bear the worst character amongst worldlings. Whose character is safe in these days? What man among us may not be accused of any indecency? Who among us can hope to stand immaculate when liars are so rife, and charges are so abundant? Be content and bear the slander. Remember, the higher the tower the longer will be the shadow; and often, the higher a man's character the fouler will be the slander that comes out against him. But remember, "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

If ye need any other witnesses I could bring them. Let Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego come forth. Ye Hebrew children, ye stood in the midst of coals when the furnace was white with heat; did God forsake you? "No," they say, "our hair was not singed, nor had the smell of fire passed on our garments." Speak, O Daniel! Thou didst stand a night

in the midst of the furious lions, who had been starved for days that they might devour thee in their hunger; what sayest thou? "My God," saith he, "hath sent his angel to shut the lions' mouths; my God, whom I serve, hath not forsaken me." But time would fail me if I should tell you of those who have "shut the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, obtained promises, wrought victories, put to flight the armies of aliens; "yet we might enlarge for a moment upon the history of great martyrs. Has God left one of them? They have suffered at the stake; their limbs have been stretched on the rack; every nerve has been strained; every bone has been dislocated. They have had their eyes plucked out; they have had their flesh rent away piecemeal to the bone with hot pincers, they have been dragged at the heels of horses, burnt on gridirons, hung up before slow fires. They have seen their infants cut in pieces before their eyes, their wives and daughters ravished, their houses burned, their country laid desolate. But has God forsaken them? Has the world triumphed? Has God left his children? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Another question is suggested, however, for your comfort, Christian; I have brought many witnesses to prove that Christ does not forsake his children; let me ask you to step into the witness box. You say that God has forsaken you--I will put a question or two to you. When your wife lay sick, and there were three little ones in the house and she approached to death, and you cried in agony to God and said, "God, thou hast forsaken me. My business fails me, and now my wife is to be taken from me! what shall I do with these little ones?" Answer this question;

did God forsake you then? "Nay," you say, "my wife still lives, she was restored to me." But when one of your children lay a-dying and the others were seized with fever, you then said, "My wife again is sick; what shall I do with this house of sickness? Now, God has forsaken me. I shall never bear this trial." Did you bear it? "Oh, yes," say you, "I passed through it and I can say, Blessed be the name of God, the affliction was sanctified to me."' Do you recollect the heavy loss you sustained in business? Not one but many; loss came after loss; every speculation in which you had been engaged broke down under you. You had many bills coming in, and you said. "Now, I shall not be able to meet them; and as a Christian man you shuddered to think of bankruptcy. You even went up with your wife into your chamber--and you two went on your knees and poured out your case before God, and asked him to help you. Did God leave you? "No," say you, "as by a miracle I was delivered I cannot tell how it was, but I came out of it clean." And yet again, another question to another one of you. Do you remember when you were in sin, before you had received pardon, your guilt was heavy upon you, and you sought God and cried to him. Did God deny you? "No," you say, "blessed be his name, I can remember the happy day when he said your sins which are many are all forgiven."' Well, you have often sinned since then. But let me ask you, when you have made confession of sin, have you not been restored? has he not lifted up upon you once more the light of his countenance? "Well," you say, "I must say he has." Then, I ask you in the name of everything that is true and holy, nay, in the name of everything that is reasonable, how dare you say that God has forsaken you now? Retract the word! Slay the thought! It cannot, must not be--

"Each sweet Ebenezer you have in review,
Confirms his good pleasure to help you quite through."

He would not have done this much for you, if he meant to leave you. Thus, it cannot be, that he who has been with you in six troubles will leave you in the seventh. He has not brought you through so many fires to let you be burned at last. Nay, take heart--

"His grace shall to the end
Stronger and brighter shine,
Not present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark divine "

within thy heart; much less quench the fire even which still burns in his infinite breast. God hath not forsaken thee as yet.

Still further to drive the thought away, I will very rapidly run through a few precious things. Were you not cold on your way hither this morning. Did you not see the snow upon the ground, and do you dare to doubt God? He hath said, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat shall never cease;" and he keeps his word. And yet you think, though he keeps that word he will forget the word that he has spoken concerning you. You come here in trouble this morning. Do you not see that God is true? that your very trouble is a proof that he has not forsaken you? If you never had any trouble, then God would have broken his promise, for did not Jesus Christ leave you it as a legacy? "In the world ye shall have tribulation." There, you have got it. That proves that God is true. Now, you have a part of the legacy, you shall have the rest:--"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." So that the very weather without, and your troubles within, ought to forbid your doubting the faithfulness of your God. But look here. Has not God made you a promise, saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?" Would you like to be called a promise-breaker? Shall I point my finger at you, and say, "There's a man whose word is not to

be relied on?" Will you point that same finger to God, and say, "His word is not to be taken, he is not to be trusted?" What! do you think your God is dishonorable? that he will give a promise and break it? not keep it? forget it? fail to remember it? What! God, the God of glory, prove dishonorable? It must not, cannot be. Recollect, again, he has given you his oath. Can you think that he will break that? Because he could swear by no greater he sware by himself. Shall God be perjured? You would not think that of your meanest fellow-creature; will you think that of your greatest and best friend? Again, would you leave your child? would you forsake it utterly? You might hide your face from it for awhile to do it good, because it had been disobedient. but will you chasten your child always? never kiss it, never caress it, never call it your loved one? It is not in a father's heart to be always angry with his child. And will God forsake you? Will he cast you out into this wide, desolate world and let you die and become the prey of his great enemy? Oh, think not so hardly of your Father. If any man should come to me, and tell me that my father had said such-and-such things about me unkind and disrespectful, I would show him the door, and say, "Get thee gone! my father would never do that: he loves me too much to do that." And when the devil comes and says, "Your Father has forgotten you," tell him to begone--you know too much of your Father ever to believe that. Say to him, "Get thee gone! it cannot be; get thee gone, Satan! Tell it to thy own companions, but tell it not to the heir of heaven." Then again, Christian, Thou believest that God has loved thee from before the foundation of the world; and yet after having loved you so long he has left off loving you now. Strange thing! Love without a beginning, yet such love to have an end. Singular thing! Eternal at one end and temporal at the other. Strange supposition! Put it away from thee. Besides, again, can Christ forget thee! Art thou not

a member of his body, of his flesh and his bones? Has the Head forgotten a finger? Has he, who did hang upon the tree and who wrote thy name in wounds upon his hand and on his side, has he forgotten? What! Jesus thy own brother, thy husband, thy head, thy all, what! he forget? he forsake? Down blaspheming thought! Back to the hell from which thou dost spring! Down! down! down! My soul lifts up her head triumphantly, and cries, "Thou Lord hast not forsaken them that seek thee," nor wilt thou do so, world without end.

III. I now come to the third and last point, and on this I shall dwell very briefly--MAN'S PRECIOUS PRIVILEGE TO SEEK GOD IN HIS DAY OF TROUBLE.

To what use, to what purpose is the buckler if we wear it not? Of what service the shield if it be permitted to rust in the house? We must take hold upon the promise of a faithful God; we must seize the comfort which he offers; but how is it to be done? Why, in prayer. Seek ye the Lord ye tried and troubled ones, and ye shall soon find your troubles stayed, your trials sweetly alleviated. We go rambling round, and round, and round, to find peace. Would that we could stay at home in our closets with our God; we should find peace much better there. We go to our neighbors, we call our friends, we tell them our woes and ask their sympathy

"Were half the breath that's vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Our cheerful song would oftener be,
Hear what the Lord hath done for me."

Go Christian brother in your troubles and seek God. It is not possible that you can perish praying. If you could perish singing, you could not perish praying on your knees. Think ye that while you can plead a Father's love, and cry with the Spirit of adoption to him, that you can

be forsaken? If you forsake the throne, then may you indeed have a fear that you are forsaken. But when the Spirit draws you to the mercy-seat, such a fear must vanish, for if thou art at the mercy-seat, God is there too. God loves the mercy-seat better than thou dost. He dwelleth between the cherubim; thou only goest there sometimes. But that is his abiding-place, his mercy-seat, where he always sits. Go thou, then, I tell thee, and thou canst not be destroyed; thy ruin is impossible, whilst thou dost cry, "Let us pray!"

And have I here this morning some that are oppressed with guilt? Dear hearer, however great your sins may have been, if thou dost seek God, thou canst not perish, for "thou Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Methinks, I hear some one say, "Oh, that just suits me. I fear I have no faith; I am afraid I don't repent as I ought. But I know I seek Christ; I am sure I am seeking him." Ah! so then this promise is thine. Take it home with thee. Suck it; get at its juice. Here, indeed, is a cluster full of new wine for thee. Take it home with thee:--"Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Seek, and ye shall find, knock, and the door shall surely be opened to you.

May God now grant his blessing, for Jesu's sake. Amen.

Chapter 2

"Let Us Pray"

A Sermon

(No. 288)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 6th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.

"But it is good for me to draw near to God."--Psalm 73:23.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS by which the true believer draws near to God. The gates of the king's palace are many; and through the love of Jesus, and the rich grace of his Spirit, it is our delight to enter and approach our heavenly Father. First and foremost among these is communion, that sweet converse which man holds with God, that state of nearness to God, in which our mutual secrets are revealed--our hearts being open unto him, his heart being manifested to us. Here it is we see the invisible, and hear the unutterable. The outward symbol of fellowship is the sacred Supper of the Lord at which, by means of simple emblems, we are divinely enabled to feed, after a spiritual sort, upon the flesh and blood of the Redeemer. This is a pearly gate of fellowship, a royal road which our feet delight to tread. Moreover, we draw near to God even in our sighs and tears, when our desolate spirits long for his sacred presence, crying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!" And as often as we read the promise written in the Word, and are enabled to receive it and rest upon it as the very words of a Covenant God, we do ready "Draw near to him."

Nevertheless, prayer is the best used means of drawing near to God. You will excuse me, then, if in considering my text this morning, I confine

myself entirely to the subject of prayer. It is in prayer mainly, that we draw near to God, and certainly it can be said emphatically of prayer, it is good for every man who knoweth how to practice that heavenly art, in it to draw near unto God. To assist your memories, that the sermon may abide with you in after days, I shall divide my discourse this morning in a somewhat singular manner; first, I shall look upon my text as being a touchstone, by which we may try our prayers, ay, and try ourselves too. Then I shall take the text as a whetstone to sharpen our desires, to make us more earnest, and more diligent in supplication, because "it is good to draw near to God" and then, I shall have the solemn task in the last place of using it as a tombstone, with a direful epitaph upon it for those who do not know what it is to draw near to God; for "A prayerless soul is a Christless soul."

I. First, then, regard my text as A TOUCHSTONE by which you may test your prayers, and thus try yourselves.

That is not prayer of which it cannot be said that there was in it a drawing near unto God. Come hither then with your supplications. I see one coming forward who says, "I am in the daily habit of using a form of prayer both at morning and at evening. I could not be happy if I went abroad before I had first repeated my morning prayer, nor could I rest at night without again going over the holy sentence appointed for use at eventide. Sir, my form is the very best that could possibly be written; it was compiled by a famous bishop, one who was glorified in martyrdom, and ascended to his God in a fiery chariot of flame." My friend, I am glad to hear, if you use a form, that you use the best. If we must have forms at all, let them be of the most excellent kind. So far so good. But let me ask you a question, I am not about to condemn you for any form you may have used, but tell me now, and tell me

honestly from your inmost soul, have you drawn near to God while you have been repeating those words? for if not, O solemn thought! all the prayers you have ever uttered have been an idle mockery. You have said prayers, but you have never prayed in your life. Imagine not that there is any enchantment in any particular set of words. You might as well repeat the alphabet backwards, or the "Abracadabra" of a wizard, as go over the best form in the world, unless there is something more than form in it. Have you drawn near to God? Suppose that one of us should be desirous of presenting a petition to the House of Commons. We wisely ask in what manner the petition should be worded: we procure the exact phrases; and suppose that in the morning we rise and read this form, or repeat it to ourselves, and conclude with, "And your petitioners will ever pray," and the like. We do the same again at night, the same the next day, and for months we continue the practice. One day meeting some member of the House, we accost him and astonish him by saying, "Sir, I wonder I have never had an answer from the House, I have been petitioning these last six months, and the form that I used was the most accurate that could be procured." "But," says he, "how was your petition presented?" "Presented! I had not thought of that, I have repeated it." "Ay," he would say, "and you may repeat it many a long day before any good comes from it! it is not the repeating it, but the presenting of the petition, and having it pleaded by some able friend that will get you the boon you desire." And so it may be, my friend, that you have been repeating collects and prayers; and have you ignorantly imagined that you have prayed? Why, your prayer has never been presented. You have not laid it before the bleeding Lamb of God, and have not asked him to take it for you into the sacred place where God abideth, and there to present the petition with his own merits before his Father's throne. I will not bid thee cease from thy form;

but I do beseech thee by the living God, either cease from it, or else beg the Holy Spirit to enable thee to draw near to God in it. Oh, I beseech you, take not what I may say for any censoriousness; I speak now as God's own messenger in this matter. Thy prayer has not been heard, and it neither can nor will be answered unless there be in it a true and real desire to draw near to God.

"Ah," saith another, "I am pleased to hear these remarks, for I am in the habit of offering extempore prayer every morning and evening, and at other times; besides, I like to hear you speak against the form, sir." Mark, I did not speak against the form, that is not my business upon this occasion. One class of sinners is always pleased to hear another class of sinners found fault with. You say you offer an extempore supplication. I bring your prayer to the same touchstone as the former. What is there in the form that you can extemporize, that it should be so much better than that which was composed by some holy man of God? Possibly your extempore form is not worth a farthing, and if it could be written, might be a disgrace to prayer-makers. I bring you at once to the test--have you in your prayer drawn near to God? When you have been on your knees in the morning, have you thought that you were talking to the King of heaven and earth? Have you breathed your desires, not to the empty winds, but into the ear of the Eternal? Have you desired to come to him and tell to him your wants, and have you sought at his hands the answer to your requests? Remember, you have not prayed successfully or acceptably unless you have in prayer endeavored to draw near to God. Suppose now, (to take a case) that I should desire some favor of a friend. I shut myself up alone, and I commence delivering an oration, pleading earnestly for the boon I need. I repeat this at night, and so on month after month. At last I meet my friend and I tell him that I have been asking a favor of him, and that he has

never heard my prayer. "Nay," saith he "I have never seen you, you never spoke to me." "Ah, but you should have heard what I said; if you had but heard it surely it would have moved your heart." "Ah," saith he, "but then you did not address it to me. You wrote a letter, you tell me, in moving strains, but did you post the letter? Did you see it was delivered to me?" "No, no," you say, "I kept the letter after I had written it. I never sent it to you." Now mark, it is just the same with extempore prayer. You plead; but if you are not pleading with God, to what effect is your pleading? You talk, but if you are not talking to a manifestly present God, to what effect is all your talking? If you do not seek to come near to him, what have you done? You have offered sacrifice, mayhap, but it has been upon your own high places, and the sacrifice has been an abomination. You have not brought it up to God's one altar; you have not come up to the mercy-seat, where is his own visible presence! You have not drawn near to God, and consequently your prayers, though they be multiplied by tens of thousands, are utterly valueless to your soul's benefit. Drawing near to God is an indispensable requisite in accepted prayer.

But, now, lest I should be misunderstood as to this drawing near to God, let me attempt to describe it in degrees, for all men cannot draw near to God with the same nearness of access. When first the life of grace begins in the soul you will draw near to God, but it will be with great fear and trembling. The soul conscious of guilt, and humbled thereby, is overawed with the solemnity of its position; it is cast to the earth with the grandeur of that God in whose presence it stands. I remember the first time I ever sincerely prayed in my life; but the words I used I remember not. Surely there were few enough words in that petition. I had often repeated a form. I had been in the habit of continually repeating it. At last I came really to pray; and then I saw

myself standing before God, in the immediate presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, and I said within myself. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." I felt like Esther when she stood before the King, faint and overcome with dread. I was full of penitence of heart, because of his majesty and my sinfulness. I think the only words I could utter were something like these: "Oh!--Ah!" And the only complete sentence was, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" The overwhelming splendor of his majesty, the greatness of his power, the severity of his justice, the immaculate character of his holiness, and all his dreadful grandeur--these things overpowered my soul, and I fell down in utter prostration of spirit. But there was in that a true and real drawing near to God. Oh, if some of you when you are in your churches and chapels, did but realize that you are in God's presence, surely you might expect to see scenes more marvellous than any of the convulsions of the Irish revival. If you knew that God was there, that you were speaking to him, that in his ear you were uttering that oft repeated confession, "We have done the things that we ought not to have done, we have left undone the things that we ought to have done."--ah, my friends, there would be then a deep humility and a solemn abasement of spirit. May God grant to us all, as often as we offer prayer of any sort, that we may truly and really draw near to him, even if it be only in this sense.

In after life as the Christian grows in grace, although he will never forget the solemnity of his position, and never will lose that holy awe which must overshadow a gracious man, when he is in the presence of a God, who can create or can destroy, yet that fear has all its terror taken out of it; it becomes a holy reverence, and no more a slavish abject dread. Then the man of God, walking amid the splendours of

deity, and veiling his face like the glorious cherubim, with those twin wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, will, reverent and bowed in spirit, approach the throne, and seeing there a God of love, of goodness, and of mercy, he will realize rather the covenant character of God than his absolute Deity. He will see in God rather his goodness than his greatness, and more of his love than of his majesty. Then will the soul, bowing again as reverently as before, enjoy a sacred liberty of intercession; for while humbled in the presence of the Infinite God, it is yet sustained by the divine consciousness of being in the presence of mercy and of love in infinite degree. This is a state to which men reach after they have had their sins forgiven, after they have passed from death unto life; then they come to rejoice in God, and draw near to him with confidence.

There is yet a third and higher stage, which I fear, too few among us ever arrive at; when the child of God, awed by the splendor, and delighting in the goodness of God, sees something which is more enchanting to him than either of these, namely, the fact of his relationship to God. He sees on the throne, not simply goodness, but his Father's goodness, not merely love, but love which has from all eternity been set upon him; love which has made him its darling, which has written his name upon its breast, love which for his sake did even deign to die. Then the child of God comes near to the throne, then he taketh hold of his Father's knees, and though conscious of the greatness of the God, yet is he still more alive to the loveliness of the Father, and he cries, "My Father, hear my prayer and grant me my request, for Jesu's sake." In this position it sometimes happens that the child of God may pray in such a way that others cannot understand him at all. If you had heard Martin Luther pray, some of you would have been shocked, and perhaps it would have been presumption if you had

prayed as he did, because Martin Luther was God's own son, and you, alas, are destitute of sonship. He had a liberty to talk to God as another man had not. If you are not the son of God, if you have no realization of your adoption, the utmost you can do is to come into the King's court as a humble beggar. May God give you grace to get further; may you come there, not simply as a petitioner, but as a follower of the Son of God--a servant. But happy is the man who has received his full adoption, and knows himself to be a son. It were rudeness for any one to do that to a king which a king's son may do. A king's own child may talk familiarly to his own parent, and there are love-doings and words of high and hallowed familiarity, and of close and sacred communing, between God and his own adopted child, that I could not tell you--things that are something like what Paul heard in Paradise, it is scarce lawful for a man to utter them in public, though in private he knows their sweetness. Ah I my dear hearers, some of you, I doubt not, know more about this than I do, but this I know, it is the happiest moment in one's life when we can go up to our Father and our God in Christ Jesus, and can know and feel of a surety that his infinite love is set on us, and that our love is gone forth to him. There is a sweet embrace that is not to be excelled. No chariots of Aminadib the heavenly rapture can describe--even Solomon's Song itself, glowing though its figures be, can scarcely reach the mystery--the length, the breadth, the height of the embracing of God by the creature, and the embracing of the creature by its God. Now, I repeat, it is not essential to the success of your prayers that you should come up to this last point. Possibly you never may attain to this eminence of grace. Nor even do I think that it is absolutely necessary that your prayer should come to the second point to be prayer. It should be so, and it will, as you grow in grace. But, mark, you must draw near to God

in some one of these three grades either in a lowly sense of his majesty, or in a delightful consciousness of his goodness, or in a ravishing sense of your own relationship to him, or else your prayer is as worthless as the chaff, it is but as whispering to the wind, or the uttering of a cry to the desert air, where no ear can hear nor hand can help. Bring your prayers, then, to this touchstones and God help you to examine them, and be honest with yourselves, for your own soul's sake.

II. I have thus concluded the touchstone. I now come to the second head of the discourse, which was THE WHETSTONE, to whet your desires, to make you more anxious to be much in prayer, and to be more earnest in it. "It is good for me to draw near to God."

Now, first and foremost, let us remark that the goodness of prayer does not lie in any merit that there is in prayer itself. There is no merit whatever in prayer; and wherever the idea of the merit of prayer could come from one is at a loss to know, except that it must have come from a near relative of the Father of Lies, who resides somewhere in Italy. There is no doubt that old Rome was the birthplace of the idea, it is too absurd and wicked to have come from any less abominable place. If a beggar should be always on your door-step, or should be always meeting you in the street, or stopping you on your journeys, and asking you to give him help, I suppose the last thing you would understand would be the merit of his prayers. You would say, "I can understand their impudence, I can allow their earnestness, I can comprehend their importunity, but as for merit, what merit can there be in a beggar's cry?" Remember, your prayers at the best are nothing but a beggar's cry. You still stand as beggars at the gate of mercy, asking for the dole of God's charity, for the love of Jesus. And he gives freely. But he gives, not because of your prayers, but because of Christ's blood and Christ's merit. Your prayers may be the sacred vessel in which he

puts the alms of his mercy; but the merit by which the mercy comes is in the veins of Christ, and nowhere else. Remember that there can be no merit in a beggar's cry.

But, now, let us note that it nevertheless is good, practically good for us to pray and draw near to God; and the first thing which would whet our desires in prayer is this:--Prayer explains mysteries. I utter that first because it is in the Psalm. Poor Asaph had been greatly troubled. He had been trying to untie that Gordion knot concerning the righteousness of a providence which permits the wicked to flourish and the godly to be tried, and because he could not untie that knot, he tried to cut it, and he cut his own fingers in the act, and became greatly troubled. He could not understand how it was that God could be just and yet give riches to the wicked while his own people were in poverty. At last Asaph understood it all, for he went into the house of his God, and there he understood their end. And he says--looking back upon his discovery of a clue to this great labyrinth--"It is good for me to draw near to God." And now, my dear hearers, if you would understand the Word of God in its knotty points, if you would comprehend the mystery of the gospel of Christ, remember, Christ's scholars must study upon their knees. Depend upon it, that the best commentator upon the Word of God is its author, the Holy Ghost, and if you would know the meaning, you must go to him in prayer. Often when a psalm has staggered me in reading it, and I have not understood it,--if I have knelt down and tried to read it over in that position, and see if I could realize the meaning in my own heart, some one word in the text has glistened, and that one word has been the key to the whole. John Bunyan says that he never forgot the divinity he taught, because it was burnt into him when he was on his knees. That is the way to learn the gospel. If you learn it upon your knees you will never

unlearn it. That which men teach you, men can unteach you. If I am merely convinced by reason, a better reasoner may deceive me. If I merely hold my doctrinal opinions because they seem to me to be correct, I may be led to think differently another day. But if God has taught them to me--he who is himself pure truth--I have not learned amiss, hut I have so learned that I shall never unlearn, nor shall I forget.

Behold, believer, thou art this day in a labyrinth; whenever thou comest to a turning place, where there is a road to the right or to the left, if thou wouldst know which way to go, fall on thy knees, then go on; and when thou comest to the next turning place, on thy knees again, and so proceed again. The one clue to the whole labyrinth of providence, and of doctrinal opinion, and of sacred thought, is to be found in that one hallowed exercise--prayer. Continue much in prayer, and neither Satan nor the world shall much deceive you. Behold before you the sacred ark of truth. But where is the key? It hangs upon the silver nail of prayer; go reach it down, unlock the casket and be rich.

A second whetstone for your prayers shall be this:--Prayer brings deliverances. In an old author I met with the following allegory; as I found it so I tell it to you. Once upon a time, the king of Jerusalem left his city in the custody of an eminent Captain, whose name was Zeal. He gave unto Zeal many choice warriors, to assist him in the protection of the city. Zeal was a right hearted man, one who never wearied in the day of battle, but would fight all day, and all night, even though his sword did cleave to his hand as the blood ran down his arm. But it happened upon this time, that the king of Arabia, getting unto himself exceeding great hosts and armies, surrounded the city, and prevented any introduction of food for the soldiers, or of ammunition to support the war. Driven to the last extremity, Captain Zeal called a

council of war, and asked of them what course they should take. Many things were proposed, but they all failed to effect the purpose, and they came to the sad conclusion that nothing was before them but the surrender of the city, although upon the hardest terms. Zeal took the resolution of the council of war, but when he read it, he could not bear it. His soul abhorred it. "Better," said he, "to be cut in pieces, than surrender. Better for us to be destroyed while we are faithful, than to give up the keys of this royal city." In his great distress, he met a friend of his, called Prayer; and Prayer said to him, "Oh! captain, I can deliver this city." Now, Prayer was not a soldier, at least he did not look as if he was a warrior, for he wore the garments of a priest. In fact he was the king's chaplain, and was the priest of the holy city of Jerusalem. But nevertheless this Prayer was a valiant man, and wore armor beneath his robes. "Oh, captain," said he, "give me three companions and I will deliver this city--their names must be Sincerity, Importunity, and faith." Now these four brave men went out of the city at the dead of night when the prospects of Jerusalem were the very blackest, they cut their way right through the hosts that surrounded the city. With many wounds and much smuggling they made their escape, and traveled all that night long as quickly as they could across the plain, to reach the camp of the king of Jerusalem. When they flagged a little, Importunity would hasten them on; and when at any time they grew faint, Faith would give them a drink from his bottle, and they would recover. They came at last to the palace of the great king, the door was shut, but Importunity knocked long, and, at last it was opened. Faith stepped in; Sincerity threw himself on his face before the throne of the great king; and then Prayer began to speak. He told the king of the great straits in which the beloved city was now placed, the dangers that surrounded it, and the almost certainty that

all the brave warriors would be cut in pieces by the morrow. Importunity repeated again and again the wants of the city. Faith pleaded hard the royal promise and covenant. At last the king said to Captain Prayer, "Take with thee soldiers and go back, lo, I am with thee to deliver this city." At the morning light, just when the day broke--for they had returned more swiftly than could have been expected, for though the journey seemed long in going there, it was very short in coming back, in fact they seemed to have gained time on the road--they arrived early in the morning, fell upon the hosts of the king of Arabia, took him prisoner, slew his army, and divided the spoil, and then entered the gates of the city of Jerusalem in triumph. Zeal put a crown of gold upon the head of Prayer, and decreed that henceforth whenever Zeal went forth to battle, Prayer should be the standard-bearer, and should lead the van. The allegory is full of truth; let him that heareth understand. If we would have deliverance in the hour, "Let us pray." Prayer shall soon bring sweet and merciful deliverances from the throne of our faithful God. This is the second sharpening of your desires upon the whetstone.

And now a third. It was said of Faith, in that mighty chapter of the Hebrews, that Faith stopped the mouth of lions and the like. But one singular thing that Faith did, which is as great a miracle as any of them, was this: Faith obtained promises. Now the like can be said of Prayer. Prayer obtains promises; therefore "it is good for thee to draw near to God." We read a story in the History of England, whether true or not we cannot tell, that Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex a ring, as a token of her favor. "When thou art in disgrace," she said, "send this ring to me. When I see it I will forgive thee, and accept thee again to favor." You know the story of that ill-fated noble, how he sent the ring by a faithless messenger, and it was never delivered,

and therefore he perished at the block. Ah! God has given to each one of his people the sacred ring of promise. And he saith, "As often as thou art in need, or in sorrow, show it to me, and I will deliver thee." Take heed then, believer, that thou hast a faithful messenger. And what messenger canst thou employ so excellent as true, real, earnest prayer? But, take heed it be real prayer; for if thy messenger miscarry, and the promise be not brought to God's eye, who knoweth, thou mayest never obtain the blessing. Draw near to God with living, loving prayer; present the promise, and thou shalt obtain the fulfillment. Many things might I say of prayer; our old divines are full of enconiums concerning it. The early fathers speak of it as if they were writing sonnets. Chrysostom preached of it as if he saw it incarnate in some heavenly form. And the choicest metaphors were gathered together to describe in rapturous phrase the power, nay, the omnipotence of prayer. Would to God that we loved prayer as our fathers did of old. It is said of James the Less, that he was so much in prayer that his knees had become hard like those of a camel. It was doubtless but a legend, but legends often are based on truths. And certain it is that Hugh Latimer, that blessed saint and martyr of our God, was accustomed to pray so earnestly in his old age when he was in his cell, that he would often pray until he had no strength left to use, and the prison attendants had need to lift him from his knees. Where are the men like these? Oh angel of the covenant, where canst thou find them? When the Son of Man cometh shall he find prayer on the earth? Ours are not worthy of the name of supplication. Oh that we had learned that saved art, that we could draw near to God, and plead his promise. Watts hath put several things together in one verse. Prayer clears the sky;--

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw."

Prayer is a heaven climber;--

"Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw."

Prayer makes even Satan quake,--

"For Satan trembles when he sees,

The weakest saint upon his knees."

I have thus given you three reasons why we should be diligent in prayer. Let me add yet another, for we must not leave this part of the whetstone until we have thoroughly entered into the reasons why "it is good for us to draw near unto God. Let me remark, that prayer has a mighty power to sustain the soul in every season of its distress and sorrow. Whenever the soul becomes weak, use the heavenly strengthening plaster of prayer. It was in prayer the angel appeared unto the Lord and strengthened him. That angel has appeared to may of us, and we have not forgotten the strength we received when on our knees. You remember in the ancient mythology the story of him who as often as he was thrown down recovered strength because he touched his mother earth. It is so with the believer. As often as he is thrown down upon his knees he recovers himself, for he touches the great source of his strength--the mercy-seat. If thou hart a burden on thy back, remember prayer, for thou shalt carry it well if thou canst pray. Once on a time Christian had upon his back a terrible burden that crushed him to the earth, so that he could not carry it; he crept along on his hands and knees. There appeared to him a fair and comely damsel, holding in her hand a wand, and she touched the burden. It was there, it was not removed, but strange to say the burden became weightless. It was there in all its outward shape and features, but without weight. That which had crushed him to the earth, had become now so light that he could leap and carry it. Beloved, do you understand this? Have you gone to God with mountains of troubles on your shoulders, unable to carry them, and have you seen them, not removed, but still remaining in the same shape, but

of a different weight? They became blessings instead of curses, what you thought was an iron gross suddenly turned out to be a wooden one, and you carried it with joy, following your Master.

I will give but one other reason, lest I should weary you, and that certainly is not my desire, but to quicken you rather than to weary you. Beloved, there is one reason why we should pray, those of us who are engaged in the Lord's work in any way, because it is prayer that will ensure success. Two laborers in God's harvest met each other once upon a time, and they sat down to compare notes. One was a man of sorrowful spirit, and the other joyous, for God had given him the desire of his heart. The sad brother said, "Friend, I cannot understand how it is that everything you do is sure to prosper: You scatter seed with both your hands very diligently, and it springs up, and so rapidly too, that the reaper treads upon the heels of the sower, and the sower himself again upon the heels of the next reaper. I have sown," said he, "as you have done, and I think I can say I have been just as diligent; I think too the soil has been the same, for we have labored side by side in the same town. I hope the seed has been of the same quality, for I have found mine where you get yours--the common granary. But alas, my seed, friend, mine never springs up. I sow it. It is as if I sowed upon the waves, I never see a harvest. Here and there a sickly blade of wheat I have discovered with great and diligent search, but I can see but little reward for all my labors." They talked long together, for the brother who was successful was one of a tender heart, and therefore he sought to comfort this mourning brother. They compared notes, they looked through all the rules of husbandry, and they could not solve the mystery, why one was successful and the other labored in vain. At last one said to the other, "I must retire." "Wherefore?" said the other, "Why this is the time" said he "when I must go and steep my

seed." "Steep your seed?" said the other. "Yes, my brother, I always steep my seed before I sow it. I steep it till it begins to swell, and germinate, and I can almost see a green blade springing from it, and then you know it speedily grows after it is sown." "Ah," said the other, "but I understand not what you mean. How do you steep your seed, and in what mysterious mixture?" "Brother," said he, "it is a composition made of one part of the tears of agony for the souls of men, and the other part of the tears of a holy agony which wrestles with God in prayer:--this mixture if you drop your seed in it, hath a transcendent efficacy to make every grain full of life, so that it is not lost." The other rose and went on his way, and forgot not what he had learned, but he began to steep his seed too; he spent less time in his study, more time in his closet; he was less abroad, more at home, less with man, and more with God. And he went abroad and scattered his seed, and he too, saw a harvest, and the Lord was glorified in them twain. Brethren, I do feel with regard to myself, and therefore, when I speak of others I speak not uncharitably, that the reason of the nonsuccess of the ministry in these years, (for compared with the days of Pentecost, I cannot call our success a success) lies in our want of prayer. If I were addressing students in the college, I think I should venture to say to them, set prayer first in your labors; let your subject be well prepared; think well of your discourse, but best of all, pray it over, study on your knees. And now in speaking to this assembly, containing Sabbath-school teachers, and others who in their way are laboring for Christ, let me beseech you whatever you do, go not about your work, except you have first entreated that the dew of heaven may drop on the seed you sow. Steep your seed and it shall spring up. We are demanding in our days more laborers--it is a right prayer; we are seeking that the seed should be of the best sort, it is a right

demand, but let us not forget another which is even more necessary than this, let us ask, let us plead with God, that the seed be steeped, that men may preach agonizing for souls. I like to preach with a burden on my heart--the burden of other men's sins, the burden of other men's hard-heartedness, the burden of their unbelief, the burden of their desperate estate, which must ere long end in perdition. There is no preaching, I am persuaded, like that: for then we preach as though--

"We ne'er might preach again,
As dying men to dying men."

And, oh, may each of you labor after the latter fashion in your own sphere, ever taking care to commit your work to God.

I will tell you here an incident of the revival. It is one I know to be correct, it is told by a good brother who would not add a word thereunto, I am sure. It happened, not long ago, that in a school which is sustained by the Corporation of the City of London, in the north of Ireland, one of the bigger boys had been converted to God; and one day, in the midst of school, a younger youth was greatly oppressed by a sense of sin, and so overwhelmed did he become that the master plainly perceived that he could not work, and, therefore, he said to him, "You had better go home, and plead with God in prayer in private." He said, however, to the bigger boy, who was all rejoicing in hope, "Go with him; take him home and pray with him." They started together: on the road they saw an empty house; the two boy went in and there began to pray; the plaintive cry of the young one, after a little time changed into a note of joy, when, suddenly springing up, he said, "I have found rest in Jesus, I have never felt as I do now; my sins, which are many, are all forgiven." The proposal was to go home; but the younger lad forbade this. No, he must go and tell the master of the school that he had found Christ. So hurrying back, he rushed in and said, "Oh! I have

found the Lord Jesus Christ." All the boys in the school, who had seen him sitting sad and dull upon the form, remarked the joy that flashed from his eye, when he cried "I have Christ," The effect was electric The boys suddenly and mysteriously disappeared; the master knew not where they were gone; but looking over into the playground, he saw by the wall were a number of boys, one by one, in prayer asking for mercy. He said to the elder youth, "Cannot you go and tell these boys the way of salvation--tell them what they must do to be saved?" He did so, and the silent prayer was suddenly changed into a loud piercing shriek, the boys in the school understood it, and, impelled by the Great Spirit, they all fell on their knees, and began to cry aloud for mercy through the blood of Christ. But, this was not all. There was a girls' schoolroom in the same building over head. The ear had been well tutored to understand what that cry meant, and soon interpreted it, and the girls too, affected by the same Spirit, fell down and began to cry aloud for the forgiveness of their sins. Here was an interruption of the school! Was ever such a thing known before in a school-room? Classes are all put aside, books forgotten; everything cast to the winds, while poor sinners are kneeling at the foot of the gross seeking for pardon. The cry was heard throughout the various offices attached to this large school, and it was heard also across the street, and passers by were attracted--men of God, ministers and clergymen of the neighborhood were brought in--the whole day was spent in prayer, and they continued until almost midnight; but they separated with songs of joy, for that vast mass of girls and boys, men and women, who had crowded the two school-rooms, had all found the Saviour.

Our good brother, Dr. Arthur, says, that he met with a youth while travelling in Ireland, and he said to him, "Do you love the Saviour?" And he said, "I trust I do." "How did you come to love him?" "Oh," said

he, "I was converted in the big school-room that night. My mother heard that there was a revival going on there, and she sent me to fetch my little brother away; she did not want him, she said, to get convinced; and I went to fetch my brother, and he was on his knees crying, Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.' I stopped, and I prayed too, and the Lord saved us both." Now to what are we to attribute this? I know many of the brethren there--the Presbyterians and others--and I do not think there is any difference or any superiority in their ministry over anything we can see or hear in London, and I think they themselves would subscribe to the truth of what I assert. The difference is this: there has been prayer there; living, hearty prayer has been offered continually, perhaps by some who did not live in Ireland. God alone knows where that revival really begun. Some woman on her bed may have been exorcised in her soul for that district, and may have been wrestling with God in prayer; and then the blessing has descended. And if God will help you and help me to lay near to heart the neighborhood in which we live, the family over which we preside, the congregation we have to address, the class we have to teach, the laborers we employ, or any of these, surely then by mighty prayer we shall bring down a great blessing from high; for prayer is never lost; preaching may be, but prayer never is. Praying breath can never be spent in vain. the Lord send to all the churches of Great Britain, first of all, the power of prayer, and then shall there come conversions of multitudes of souls through the outpoured energy of the Holy One of Israel!

III. I shall have little time to close up the third point, further than to remark that while I have been preaching I do hope there have been some here who have heard for themselves. Ah, my hearers, religion is more solemn work than some men think of. I am often shocked with the brutality of what are called the lower glasses of society, and with

their coarse blasphemies; but there is one thing--and I speak honestly to you now, as fearing no man--there is one thing that is to me more shocking still, and that is the frivolous way in which the mass of our higher classes spend all their time. What are your morning calls but pretenses for wasting your time? What are your amusements but an attempt to kill the time that hangs laboriously on your hands? And what are many of your employments but an industrious idleness, spinning and knitting away of precious hours which God knows will be few enough when you come to look back upon them from a dying bed. Oh! if you did but know what you are made for, and your high destiny, you would not waste your time in the paltry things that occupy your hands and your souls. God Almighty forgive those wasted hours which if you be Christians ought to be employed for the good of others. God forgive those moments of frivolity which ought to have been occupied in prayer. If such a congregation as this could but be solemnly alive to the interests of this land and the poverty of it, to its miseries, to its wickedness: if but such a host as I have here could solemnly feel this matter, how much good would certainly come to us! This would be the best missionary society; so many hearts of tenderness and affection, all beating high with an anxious desire to see sinners brought to Christ. Ah! we cannot approve of the doctrines of the Romish church, but still sometimes we have to be abashed at their zeal. Would God that we had sisters of mercy who were merciful indeed; not dressed in some fanciful garb, but going from house to house to comfort the sick and help the needy! Would that ye all were brothers of the heart of Jesus, and all of you sisters of him, whose mother's heart was pierced with agony, when he died that we might be saved. Oh, my dear hearers, this I speak with an earnest anxiety that the words may be prophetic of a better age.

But now, there are some of you here, perhaps, that never prayed in your

lives, toying like glittering insects, wasting your little day. Ye know not that death is near ye; and oh, if ye have never sought and have never found the Saviour; however bright those eyes, if they have never seen the wounds of Christ, if they have never looked to Christ, they shall not simply be sealed in death, but they must behold sights of fearful woe eternally. Oh may God grant you grace to pray; may he lead you home to your houses, to fall on your knees, and for the first time to cry, "Lord have mercy upon me!" Remember you have sins to confess, and if you think you have not, you are in a sad state of heart, it proves that you are dead in trespasses and sins--dead in them. Go home and ask the Lord to give you a new heart and a right spirit, and may he who dictates the prayer graciously hear; and may you, and I, and all of us, when this life has passed away and time is exchanged for eternity, stand before the throne of God at last. I have to preach continually to a congregation in which I know there are many drunkards, swearers, and the like--with these men I know how to deal, and God has given me success; but l sometimes tremble for you amiable, excellent, upright daughters, who make glad your father's house, and wives that train up your children well. Remember, if you have not the root of the matter in you--"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And as we must be honest with the poor, so must we be with the rich; and as we must lay the axe to the root of the tree with the drunkard and the swearer, so must we with you. You are as much lost as they are, and shall as surely perish as they do, unless you be born again. There is but one road to heaven for you all alike. As a minister of the gospel, I know no rich men and no poor men; I know no working classes and no gentlemen; I know simply God's sinful creatures, bidden to come to Christ and find mercy through his atonement. He will not reject you. Put the black thought away. He is able to save; doubt him not. Come to

him; come and welcome: God help you to come.

God Almighty bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 3

The Minister's Farewell

A Sermon

(No. 289)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 11th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens,

Upon the last occasion of his preaching in that place.

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."--Acts 20:26-27.

WHEN Paul was parting from his Ephesian friends, who had come to bid him farewell at Miletus, he did not request of them a commendation of his ability; he did not request of them a recommendation for his fervid eloquence, his profound learning, his comprehensive thought, or his penetrating judgment. He knew right well that he might have credit for all these, and yet be found a castaway at last. He required a witness which would be valid in the court of heaven, and of value in a dying hour. His one most solemn adjuration is: "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." In the apostle this utterance was no egotism; it was a fact that he had, without courting the smiles or fearing the frowns of any, preached the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as it had been taught to him by the Holy Spirit, and as he had received it in his own heart. O that all ministers of Christ could honestly challenge the like witness!

Now, this morning I propose, by the help of God's Spirit, to do two things. The first will be to say a little upon the apostle's solemn

declaration at parting; and then, afterwards, in a few solemn words, to take my own personal farewell.

1. In the first place, THE APOSTLE'S WORD AT PARTING: "I call you to record I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The first thing that strikes us is the declaration of the apostle concerning the doctrines he had preached. He had preached ALL the counsel of God. By which I think we are to understand that he had given to his people the entire gospel. He had not dwelt upon some one doctrine of it, to the exclusion of the rest; but it had been his honest endeavour to bring out every truth according to the analogy of faith. He had not magnified one doctrine into a mountain, and then diminished another into a molehill; but he had endeavoured to present all blended together, like the colours in the rainbow, as one harmonious and glorious whole. Of course, he did not claim for himself any infallibility as a man, although as an inspired man he was without error in his writings. He had, doubtless, sins to confess in private, and faults to bemoan God. He had, doubtless, sometimes failed to put a truth as clearly as he could have wished, when preaching the Word; he had not always been earnest as he could desire; but at least he could claim this, that he had not wilfully kept back a single part of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, I must bring down the apostle's saying to these modern times; and I take it, if any one of us would clear our conscience by delivering the whole counsel of God, we must take care that we preach in the first place the doctrines of the gospel. We ought to declare the grand doctrine of the Father's love towards his people from before all worlds. His sovereign choice of them, his covenant purposes concerning them, and his immutable promises to them, must all be uttered with trumpet tongue. Coupled with this the true evangelist must never fail

to set forth the beauties of the person of Christ, the glory of his offices, the completeness of his work, and above all, the efficacy of his blood. Whatever we omit, this must be in the most forcible manner proclaimed again and again. That is no gospel which has not Christ in it, and the modern idea of preaching THE TRUTH instead of Christ, is a wicked device of Satan. Nor is this all, for as there are Three Persons in the Godhead, we must be careful that they all have due honour in our ministry. The Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, in sanctification and in perseverance, must be always magnified from our pulpit. Without his power our ministry is a dead letter, and we cannot expect his arm to be made bare unless we honour him day-by-day.

Upon all these matters we are agreed, and I therefore turn to points upon which there is more dispute, and consequently more need of honest avowal, because more temptation to concealment. To proceed then:--I question whether we have preached the whole counsel of God, unless predestination with all its solemnity and sureness be continually declared--unless election be boldly and nakedly taught as being one of the truths revealed of God. It is the minister's duty, beginning from this fountain head, to trace all the other streams; dwelling on effectual calling, maintaining justification by faith, insisting upon the certain perseverance of the believer, and delighting to proclaim that gracious covenant in which all these things are contained, and which is sure to all the chosen, blood-bought seed. There is a tendency in this age to throw doctrinal truth into the shade. Too many preachers are offended with that stern truth which the Covenanters held, and to which the Puritans testified in the midst of a licentious age. We are told that the times have changed: that we are to modify these old (so-called) Calvinistic doctrines, and bring them down to the tone of the times; that, in fact, they need dilution, that men have become so

intelligent that we must pare off the angles of our religion, and make the square into a circle by rounding off the most prominent edges. Any man who doth this, so far as my judgment goes, does not declare the whole counsel of God. The faithful minister must be plain, simple, pointed, with regard to these doctrines. There must be no dispute about whether he believes them or not. He must so preach them that his hearers will know whether he preaches a scheme of freewill, or a covenant of grace--whether he teaches salvation by works, or salvation by the power and grace of God.

But beloved, a man might preach all these doctrines to the full, and yet not declare the whole counsel of God. For here comes the labour and the battle; here it is that he who is faithful in these modern days will have to bare the full brunt of war. It is not enough to preach doctrine; we must preach duty, we must faithfully and firmly insist upon practice. So long as you will preach nothing but bare doctrine, there is a certain class of men of perverted intellect who will admire you, but once begin to preach responsibility--say outright, once for all, that if the sinner perish it is his own fault, that if any man sinks to hell, his damnation will lie at his own door, and at once there is a cry of "Inconsistency! How can these two things stand together?" Even good Christian men are found who cannot endure the whole truth, and who will oppose the servant of the Lord who will not be content with a fragment, but will honestly present the whole gospel of Christ. This is one of the troubles that the faithful minister has to endure. But he is not faithful to God--I say it solemnly, I do not believe that any man is even faithful to his own conscience, who can preach simply the doctrine of responsibility. I do assuredly believe that every man who sinks into hell shall have himself alone to curse for it. It shall be said of them as they pass the fiery portal: "Ye

would not." "Ye would have none of my rebukes. Ye were bidden to the supper and ye would not come. I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and no man regarded. And now, behold, I will mock at your calamities. I will laugh when your fear cometh." The apostle Paul knew how to dare public opinion, and on one hand to preach the duty of man, and on the other the sovereignty of God. I would borrow the wings of an eagle and fly to the utmost height of high doctrine when I am preaching divine sovereignty. God hath absolute and unlimited power over men to do with them as he pleases, even as the potter doeth with the clay. Let not the creature question the Creator, for he giveth no account of his matters. But when I preach concerning man, and look at the other aspect of truth, I dive to the utmost depth. I am, if you will so call me, a low-doctrine man in that, for as an honest messenger of Christ I must use his own language, and cry: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the Son of God." I do not see that the whole counsel of God is declared, unless those two apparently contradictory points are brought out and plainly taught. To preach the whole counsel of God it is necessary to declare the promise in all its freeness, sureness and richness. When the promise makes the subject of the text the minister should never be afraid of it. If it is an unconditional promise, he should make its unconditionality one of the most prominent features of his discourse; he should go the whole way with whatever God has promised to his people. Should the command be the subject, the minister must not flinch; he must utter the precept as fully and confidently as he would the promise. He must exhort, rebuke, command with all long-suffering. He must ever maintain the fact that the perceptive part of the gospel is as valuable--nay, as invaluable--as the promissory part. He must stand to it, that "By their fruits ye shall know them;" that "Unless the tree bring forth good

fruit it is hewn down and cast into the fire." Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living. Holiness of life must be constantly insisted on, as well as that simple faith which depends for all on Christ. To declare the whole counsel of God--to gather up ten thousand things into one--I think it is needful that when a minister gets his text, he should say what that text means honestly and uprightly. Too many preachers get a text and kill it. They wring its neck, then stuff it with some empty notions and present it upon the table for an unthinking people to feed upon. That man does not preach the whole counsel of God who does not let God's Word speak for itself in its own pure, simple language. If he finds one day a text like this: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," the faithful minister will go all the lengths of that text. And if on the morrow the Spirit of God lays home to his conscience this: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," or this other: "Whosoever will, let him come," he will be just as honest with his text on that side as he was on the other. He will not shirk the truth. He will dare to look at it straight in the face himself and then he will bring it up into the pulpit, and there say to it: "O Word, speak for thyself, and be thou heard alone. Suffer me not, O Lord, to pervert or ministerpret thine own heaven-sent truth." Simple honesty to the pure Word of God is I think requisite to the man who would not shun to declare the whole counsel of God.

Moreover, this is not all, If a man would declare the whole counsel of God, and not shun to do so, he must be very particular upon the crying sins of the times. The honest minister does not condemn sin in the mass; he singles out separate sins in his hearers, and without drawing the bow at a venture he puts an arrow on the string and the Holy Spirit sends it right home to the individuals conscience. He who is true to

his God does not look to his congregation as a great mass, but as separate individuals, and he endeavours to adapt his discourse to men's conscience, so that they will perceive he speaks of them. It is said of Rowland Hill, that he was so personal a preacher, that if a man were far away sitting in a window, or in some secret corner, he would nevertheless feel--"That man is speaking to me." And the true preacher who declares the whole counsel of God, so speaks, that his hearers feel that there is something for them; a reproof for their sins, an exhortation which they ought to obey, a something which comes pointedly, pertinently and personally home. Nor do I think any man has declared the whole counsel of God, who does not do this. If there be a vice that you should shun, if there be an error that you should avoid, if there be a duty that you ought to fulfil, if all these things be not mentioned in the discourses from the pulpit, the minister has shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If there be one sin that is rife in the neighbourhood, and especially in the congregation, should the minister avoid that particular vice in order to avoid offending you, he has been untrue to his calling, dishonest to his God. I do not know how I can describe the man who declares the whole counsel of God better than by referring you to the epistles of St. Paul. There you have the doctrine and the precept, experience and practice. He tells of corruption within and temptation without. The whole divine life is portrayed, and the needed directions given. There you have the solemn rebuke, and the gentle comfort. There you have the words that "drop as the rain, and distil as the dew," and there you have the sentences that roll like thunders, and flash like lightning. There you see him at one time with his crook in his hand, gently leading his sheep into the pastures; and, anon, you see him with his sword drawn , doing valiant battle against the enemies of Israel. He who would be faithful, and

preach the whole counsel of God, must imitate the apostle Paul, and preach as he wrote.

The question, however, is suggested, is there any temptation which arises to the man who endeavours to do this? Is there anything which would tempt him from the straight path and induce him not to preach the whole counsel of God? Ah, my brother, little do you understand the minister's position, if you have not sometimes trembled for him. Espouse but one phase of the truth, and you shall be cried up to the very heavens. Become such a Calvinist that you shut your eyes to one half the Bible, and cannot see the responsibility of the sinner, and men will clap their hands, and cry Hallelujah! and on the backs of many you shall be hoisted to a throne, and become a very prince in their Israel. On the other hand, begin to preach mere morality, practice without doctrine, and you shall be elevated on other men's shoulders; you shall, if I may use such a figure, ride upon these asses into Jerusalem; and you shall hear them cry, Hosanna! and see them wave their palm branches before you. But once preach the whole counsel of God, and you shall have both parties down upon you; one crying, "The man is too high," the other saying, "No, he is too low;" the one will say, "He's a rank Arminian," the other, "He's a vile hyper- Calvinist." Now, a man does not like to stand between two fires. There is an inclination to please one or other of the two parties, and so, if not to increase one's adherents, at least to get a more ferociously attached people. Ay, but if we once begin to think of that, if we suffer the cry of either party on either hand to lead us from that narrow path--the path of right and truth and rectitude, it is all over with us then. How many ministers feel the influence of persons of wealth. The minister in his pulpit, perhaps, is inclined to think of the squire in his green pew. Or else he thinks: "What will deacon

so-and-so say?" or, "What will the other deacon say, who thinks the very reverse?" or, "What will Mr. A, the editor of such a newspaper, write next Monday?" or, "What will Mrs. B. say next time I meet her?" Yes, all these things cast their little weight into the scale; and they have a tendency, if a man be not kept right by God the Holy Spirit, to make him diverge a little from that narrow path, in which alone he can stand if he would declare the whole counsel of God. Ah, friends, there are honours to be had by the man who will espouse the opinion of a clique; but while there are honours, there are far more dishonours to be gained by him who will stand firm to the unstained banner of truth, singly and alone, and do battle against mischief of every shape, as well in the church as in the world. Therefore, it was no mean testimony that the apostle asked for himself, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

But, then, let me remark further, while there is this temptation not to declare all the counsel of God, the true minister of Christ feels impelled to preach the whole truth, because it and it alone can meet the wants of man. What evils has this world seen through a distorted, mangled, man-moulded gospel. What mischiefs have been done to the souls of men by men who have preached only one part and not all the counsel of God. My heart bleeds for many a family where Antinomian doctrine has gained the sway. I could tell many a sad story of families dead in sin, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron, by the fatal preaching to which they listen. I have known convictions stifled and desires quenched by the soul-destroying system which takes manhood from man and makes him no more responsible than an ox. I cannot imagine a more ready instrument in the hands of Satan for the ruin of souls than a minister who tells sinners that it is not their duty to repent of their sins or to believe in Christ, and who has the arrogance to call himself a

gospel minister, while he teaches that God hates some men infinitely and unchangeably for no reason whatever but simply because he chooses to do so. O my brethren! may the Lord save you from the voice of the charmer, and keep you ever deaf to the voice of error.

Even in Christian families, what evil will a distorted gospel produce! I have seen the young believer, just saved from sin, happy in his early Christian career, and walking humbly with his God. But evil has crept in, disguised in the mantle of truth. The finger of partial blindness was laid upon their eyes, and but one doctrine could be seen. Sovereigntywas seen, but not responsibility. The minister once beloved was hated; he who had been honest to preach God's Word, was accounted as the off-scouring of all things. And what became the effect? The very reverse of goood and gracious. Bigotry usurped the place of love; bitterness lived where once there had been a loveliness of character. I could point you to innumerable instances where harping upon any one peculiar doctrine has driven men to excess of bigotry and bitterness. And when a man has once come there, he is ready enough for sin of any kind to which the devil may please to tempt him. There is a necessity that the whole gospel should be preached, or else the spirits, even of Christians, will become marred and maimed. I have known men diligent for Christ, labouring to win souls with both hands; and on a sudden they have espoused one particular doctrine and not the whole truth, and they have subsided into lethargy. On the other hand, where men have only taken the practical side of truth, and left out the doctrinal, too many professors have run over into legality; have talked as if they were to be saved by works, and have almost forgotten that grace by which they were called. They are like the Galatians; they have been bewitched by what they have heard. The believer in Christ, if he is to be kept pure, simple, holy, charitable, Christ-like, is only to be kept

so by a preaching of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. And as for the salvation of sinners, ah, my hearers, we can never expect God to bless our ministry for the conversion of sinners unless we preach the gospel as a whole. Let me get but one part of the truth, and always dwell upon it, to the exclusion of every other, and I cannot expect my Master's blessing. If I preach as he would have me preach, he will certainly own the word; he will never leave it without his own living witness. But let me imagine that I can improve the gospel, that I can make it consistant, that I can dress it up and make it look finer, I shall find that my Master is departed, and that Ichabod is written on the walls of the sanctuary. How many there are kept in bondage through neglect of gospel invitations. They are longing to be saved. They go up to the house of God, crying to be saved; and there is nothing but predestination for them. On the other hand, what multitudes are kept in darkness through practical preaching. It is do! do! do! and nothing but do! and the poor souls come away and say: "Of what use is that to me? I can do nothing. Oh, that I had a way shown to me available for salvation." Of the apostle Paul we think it may be truly said, that no sinner missed a comfort from his keeping back Christ's cross; that no saint was bewildered in spirit from his denying the bread of heaven and withholding precious truth; that no practical Christian became so practical as to become legal, and no doctrinal Christian became so doctrinal as to become unpractical. His preaching was of so savoury and consistent a kind, that they who heard him, being blessed of the Spirit, became Christians indeed, both in life and spirit, reflecting the image of their Master.

I feel I cannot dwell very long upon this text. I have been so extremely unwell for the last two days, that the thoughts which I hoped to present to you in better form, have only come tumbling out of my

mouth in far from an orderly manner.

II. I must now turn away from the apostle Paul to address you A VERY FEW EARNEST, SINCERE AND AFFECTIONATE WORDS BY WAY OF FAREWELL. "Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." I wish not to say anything in self-commendation and praise; I will not be my own witness as to my faithfulness; but I appeal unto you, I take you to witness this day, that I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Often have I come into this pulpit in great weakness, and I have far more often gone away in great sorrow, because I have not preached to you as earnestly as I desired. I confess to many errors and failings, and more especially to a want of earnestness when engaged in prayer for your souls. But there is one charge which my conscience acquits me of this morning, and I think you will acquit me too, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If in anything I have erred, it has been an error of judgment; I may have been mistaken, but so far as I have learned the truth, I can say that no fear of public opinion, nor of private opinion, has ever turned me aside from that which I hold to be the truth of my Lord and Master. I have preached to you the precious things of the gospel. I have endeavoured to the utmost of my ability to preach grace in all its fulness. I know the preciousness of that doctrine in my own experience; God forbid that I should preach any other. If we are not saved by grace, we can never be saved at all. If from first to last the work of salvation be not in God's hands, none of us can ever see God's face with acceptance. I preach this doctrine, not from choice, but from absolute necessity, for if this doctrine be not true, then are we lost souls; your faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are still in our sins, and there we must continue until the end. But, on the other

hand, I can say also, I have not shunned to exhort, to invite, to entreat. I have bidden the sinner come to Christ. I have been urged not to do so, but I could not resist it. With bowels yearning over perishing sinners, I could not conclude without crying: "Come to Jesus, sinner, come." With eyes weeping for sinners, I am compelled to bid them come to Jesus. It is not possible for me to dwell upon doctrine without invitation. If you come not to Christ it is not for want of calling, or because I have not wept over your sins, and travailed in birth for the souls of men. The one thing I have to ask of you is this:--bear me witness, my hearers, bear me witness, that in this respect I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have preached all that I know of the whole counsel of God. Have I known a single sin which I have not rebuked? Has there been a doctrine that I have believed which I have kept back? Has there been a part of the Word, doctrinal or experimental, which I have wilfully concealed? I am very far from perfect, again with weeping I confess my unworthiness; I have not served God as I ought to do; I have not been so earnest with you as I could desire. Now that my three years' ministry here is over, I could have wished that I might begin again, that I might fall on my knees before you and beseech you to regard the things that make for your peace. But here, again, I do repeat it, that while as to earnestness I plead guilty, yet as to truth and honesty I can challenge the bar of God, I can challenge the elect angels, I can call you all to witness, that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

It is easy enough, if one wills to do it, to avoid preaching an objectionable doctrine, by simply passing over the texts which teach it. If an unpleasant truth thrusts itself on you, it is not hard to put it aside, imagining that it would disturb your previous teaching. Such concealment may, for a while succeed, and possibly your people will not

find it out for years. But if I have studied after anything, I have sought always to bring out that truth which I have neglected beforehand; and if there has been any one truth that I have kept back hitherto, it shall be my earnest prayer that from this day forth it may be made more prominent, that so it may be the better understood and seen. Well, I simply ask you this question, and if I indulge in some little egotism, if on this parting day "I am become a fool in glorying;" it is not for the sake of glorying, it is with a better motive--my hearer, I put this question to you. There may come sad disasters to many of you. In a little time some of you may be frequenting places where the gospel is not preached. You may embrace another and a false gospel. I only ask this thing of you: Bear me witness that it was not my fault,--that I have been faithful and have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. In a little time some here who have been restrained by the fact of having attended a place of worship, seeing the chosen minister has gone, may not go anywhere else afterwards. You may become careless. Perhaps next Sabbath day you may be sitting at home, lolling about and wasting the day. But there is one thing I should like to say before you make up your mind not to attend the house of God again:--Bear me witness that I have been faithful with you. It may be that some here who have professedly run well for a time while they have been hearing the Word, may go back; some of you may go right into the world again; you may become drunkards, swearers and the like. God forbid that it be so! But I charge you, if you plunge into sin, do at least say this one thing for him who desires nothing so much as to see you saved--say, I have been honest with you; that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Oh, my hearers, some of you in a little time will be on your dying-beds. When your pulse is feeble, when the terrors of grim death

are round about you, if you are still unconverted to Christ, there is one thing I shall want you to add to your last will and testament; it is this--the exclusion of the poor minister who stands before you this day from any share in that desperate folly of yours which has led you to neglect your own soul. Oh, have I not cried to you to repent? Have I not bidden you look to it ere death surprised you? Have I not exhorted you, my hearers, to flee for a refuge to the hope set before you? Oh, sinner, when thou art wading through the black river, cast back no taunt on me as though I was thy murderer, for in this thing I can say: "I wash my hands in innocency; I am clear of your blood." But the day is coming when we shall all meet again. This great assembly shall be submerged into a greater, as the drop loses itself in the ocean. And I shall stand on that day to take my trial at God's bar. If I have not warned you, I have been an unfaithful watchman, and your blood will be required at my hands; if I have not preached Christ to you, and bidden you flee for refuge, then, though you perish, yet shall your soul be required of me. I beseech you, if you laugh at me, if you reject my message, if you despise Christ, if you hate his gospel, if you will be damned, yet at least give me an acquittal of your blood. I see some before me who do not often hear me; and yet I can say concerning them, they have been the subject of my private prayers; and often, too, of my tears, when I see them going on in their iniquities. Well, I do ask this one thing, and as honest men you cannot deny it me. If you will have your sins, if you will be lost, if you will not come to Christ, at least, amid the thunders of the great day, when I stand for trial at God's bar, acquit me of having destroyed your souls.

What can I say more? How shall I plead with you? Had I an angel's tongue, and the heart of the Saviour, then would I plead; but I cannot say more than I have often done. In God's name I beseech you flee to

Christ for refuge. If all hath not sufficed before, let this suffice thee now. Come, guilty soul, and flee away to him whose wide open arms are willing to receive every soul that fleeth to him with penitence and faith. In a little time the preacher himself will lie stretched upon his bed. A few more days of solemn meeting, a few more sermons, a few more prayers, and I think I see myself in yon upper chamber, with friends watching around me. He who has preached to thousands now needs consolation for himself. He who has cheered many in the article of death is now passing through the river himself. My hearers, shall there be any of you whom I shall see upon my death bed who shall curse me with being unfaithful? Shall these eyes be haunted with the visions of men whom I have amused, and interested, but into whose hearts I have never sought to plunge the truth? Shall I lie there, and shall these mighty congregations pass in dreary panorama before me, and as they subside before my eyes, one after the other, shall each one curse me as being unfaithful? God forbid. I trust you will do me this favour: that when I lie a-dying you will allow that I am clear of the blood of all men, and have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I see myself standing at the last great day a prisoner at the bar. What if this shall be read against me:--"Thou hast had many to listen to thee; thousands have crowded to hear the words which fell from my lips; but thou hast misled, thou hast deceived, thou hast wilfully mistaught this people." Thunders such as have been never heard before must roll over this poor head, and lightnings more terrific than have ever scathed the fiend shall blast this heart, if I have been unfaithful to you. My position--if I had but one preached the Word to these crowds, not to speak of many thousands of times--my position were the most awful in the whole universe if I were unfaithful. Oh may God avert that worst of ills--unfaithfulness--from my head. Now, as here I stand, I make this

my last appeal: "I pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." But if ye will not be, I ask you this single favour--and I think you will not deny it me--take the blame of your own ruin, for I am pure from the blood of all men, since I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

This much by way of calling you to witness. Now, I come to put up a request. I have a favour to ask of all here present. If in aught you have been profited, if in anything you have ever had comfort, if you have found Christ in any way during the preaching of the gospel here, I beg you, even though you should not listen to my words again, I beg you to carry me up in your heart before the throne of God in prayer. It is by the prayers of our people that we live. God's ministers owe more to the prayers of their people than they ever know. I love my people for their prayerfulness for me. Never minister was so much prayer for as I have been. But will those of you who will be compelled to separate from us by reason of distance, and the like, will you still carry me in your thoughts before God, and let my name be ungraven on your bosoms as often as you present yourselves before the mercy seat. It is a little thing I ask. It is simply that you say: "Lord, help thy servant to win souls to Christ." Ask that he may be made more useful than he has ever been; that if he is in aught mistaken he may be set right. If he has not comforted you, ask that he may do so in the future; but if he has been honest with you, then pray that your Master may have him in his holy keeping. And while I ask you to put up this request for me, it is for all those that preach the truth in Jesus. Brethren, pray for us. We would labour for you as those that must give account. Ah, it is no little thing to be a minister if we are true to our calling. As Baxter once said, when someone told him the ministry was easy work: "Sir, I wish you would take my place, if you think so, and try it." If to

agonize with God in prayer, if to wrestle for the souls of men, if to be abused and not to reply, if to suffer all manner of rebukes and slanders, if this be rest, take it, sir, for I shall be glad to get rid of it. I do ask that you would pray for all ministers of Christ, that they may be helped and upheld, maintained and supported, that their strength may be equal to their day.

And, then, having put up this request for myself, and therefore a selfish one, I have an entreaty to put up for others. My hearers, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that there are still many of you who have long listened to the Word here, but who have still not given your hearts to Christ. I am glad to see you here, even though it should be for the last time. If you should never tread the hallowed courts of God's house again, never hear his Word, never listen to hearty invitation or honest warning, I have one entreaty to put up for you. Mark, not a request, but an entreaty; and such a one, that if I were begging for my life I could not be more honest and intensely earnest about it. Poor sinner, stop awhile, and think. If thou hast heard the gospel and been profited by it, what wilt thou think of all thy lost opportunities when thou art on thy dying bed? What wilt thou think when thou art cast into hell, when this thought shall come ringing in thy ears: "Thou didst hear the gospel, but thou didst reject it;" when the devils in hell shall laugh in thy face, and say: "We never rejected Christ, we never despised the Word," and they shall thrust thee into a deeper hell than ever they themselves experienced. I entreat thee, stop, and think of this. Are the joys that thou hast in this world worth living for? Is not this world a dull and dreary place? Man, turn over a fresh leaf. I tell thee, there is no joy for thee here, and there is none hereafter whilst thou art what thou art. Oh, may God teach thee that the mischief lies in thy sin. Thou hast unforgiven sin

about thee. As long as thy sin is unforgiven, thou canst neither be happy here, nor in the world to come. My entreaty is, go to thy chamber; if thou knowest thy self to be guilty, make a full confession there before God; ask him to have mercy upon thee, for Jesus' sake. And he will not deny thee. Man, he will not dent thee; he will answer thee; he will put all thy sins away; he will accept thee; he will make thee his child. And as thou shalt be more happy here, so shalt thou be blessed in the world to come. Oh, Christian men and women, I entreat you, implore the Spirit of God to lead many in this crowd to full confession, to real prayer, and humble faith; and if they have never repented before, may they now turn to Christ. Oh, sinner, thy life is short, and death is hastening. Thy sins are many, and if judgment has leaden feet, yet has it a sure and heavy hand. Turn, turn, turn, I beseech thee. May the Holy Spirit turn thee. Lo, Jesus is lifted up before thee now. By his five wounds, I beseech thee, turn. Look thou to him and live. Believe on him and thou shalt be saved, for whosoever believeth on the Son of Man hath everlasting life, and he shall never perish, neither shall the wrath of God rest upon him.

May the Spirit of God now command his own abiding blessing, even life for evermore, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

At the commencement of the Service, Mr. SPURGEON said:--"The service of this morning will partake very much of the character of a farewell discourse and a farewell meeting. However sorrowful it is to me to part with many of you, whose faces I have so long seen in the throng of my hearers, yet for Christ's sake, for the sake of consistency and truth, we are compelled to withdraw from this place, and on next Sabbath morning hope to worship God in Exeter Hall. On two occasions before, as our friends are aware, it was proposed to open this place in the evening, and I was then able to prevent it by the simple declaration,

that if so I should withdraw. That declaration suffices not at this time; and you can therefore perceive that I should be a craven to the truth, that I should be inconsistent with my own declarations, that in fact, my name would cease to be SPURGEON, if I yielded. I neither can nor will give way in anything in which I know I am right; and in the defence of God's holy Sabbath, the cry of this day is, Arise, let us go hence!'"

Chapter 4

The Inexhaustible Barrel

A Sermon

(No. 290)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 18th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand

"And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah."--1 Kings 17:16.

IN the midst of wrath God remembers mercy. Divine love is rendered conspicuous when it shines in the midst of judgments. Fair is that lone star which smiles through the rifts of the thunder-clouds; bright is the oasis which blooms in the wilderness of sand; so fair and so bright is love in the midst of wrath. In the present instance, God had sent an all-consuming famine upon the lands of Israel and Sidon. The two peoples had provoked the Most High, the one by renouncing him, and the other by sending forth their queen Jezebel, to teach idolatry in the midst of Israel. God therefore determined to withhold both dew and rain from the polluted lands. But while he did this, he took care that his own chosen ones should be secure. If all the brooks are dry, yet shall there be one reserved for Elijah; and if that should fail, God shall still preserve for him a place of sustenance; nay, not only so, for God had not simply one Elijah, but he had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave, and though the whole land was subject to famine, yet these fifties in the cave were fed, and fed from Ahab's table, too, by his faithful, God-fearing steward, Obadiah. Let us from this draw this inference, that come what

may God's people are safe. If the world is to be burned with fire, among the ashes there shall not be found the relics of a saint. If the world should again be drowned with water, (as it shall not) yet should there be found another ark for God's Noah. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let all its pillars tremble, let the skies themselves be rent in twain, yet amid the wreck of worlds the believer shall be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. If God cannot save his people under heaven, he will save them in heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven shall be the place of their reception and their safety. Be ye then confident, when ye hear of wars, and rumors of wars. Let no agitation distress you. Whatsoever cometh upon the earth, you, beneath the broad wings of Jehovah, shall be secure. Stay yourself upon his promise, rest ye in his faithfulness, and bid defiance to the blackest future, for there is nothing in it direful for you.

Though, however, I make these few observations by way of preface, this is not the subject of this morning. I propose to take the case of the poor widow of Sarepta as an illustration of divine love, as it manifests itself to man; and I shall have three things for you to notice. First, the object of divine love; secondly, the singular methods of divine love; and, then, in the third place, the undying faithfulness of divine love--"The barrel of meal did not waste, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord."

I. In the first place let me speak upon THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE LOVE.

1. And here we remark at the very beginning, how sovereign was the choice. Our Savior himself teaches us when he says, "I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." Here was divine

sovereignty. When God would make choice of a woman it was not one of his own favored race of Israel, but a poor benighted heathen, sprung from a race who of old had been doomed to be utterly cut off. Here was electing love in one of its sovereign manifestations. Men are always quarrelling with God because he will not submit his will to their dictation. If there could be a God who was not absolute men would think themselves gods, and hence sovereignty is tasted because it humbles the creature, and makes him bow before a Lord, a King, a Master, who will do as he pleases. If God would choose kings and princes, then would men admire his choice. If he would make his chariots stay at the door of nobles, if he would step from his throne and give his mercy only to the great, the wise, and the learned, then might there be heard the shout of praise to a God who thus honored the fine doings of man. But because he chooses to take the base things of this world, the things that are despised, and the things that are not; because he takes these things to bring to nought the things that are, therefore is God hated of men.
Yet, know that God hath set apart him that is godly for himself. He hath chosen to himself a people whom he will bring to himself at last, who are his peculiar treasure, the favourites of his choice. But these people are by nature the most unlikely ones upon the face of the whole world. Men to-day sunken in sin, immersed in folly, brutalized, without knowledge, without wit, these are the very ones that God ordains to save. To them he sends the word in its effectual might, and these are plucked like brands from the burning. None can guess the reasons of divine election. This great act is as mysterious as it is gracious. Throughout Scripture we are continually startled with resplendent instances of unlimited sovereignty, and the case of this widow is one among the many. Electing love passes by the thousands of widows that dwelt in God's own land, and it journeys beyond the borders of Canaan,

to cherish and preserve a heathen woman of Sarepta.

Some men hate the doctrine of divine Sovereignty; but those who are called by grace love it, for they feel, if it had not been for sovereignty they never would have been saved. Ah, if we are now his people, what was there in any of us to merit the esteem of God? How is it that some of us are converted, while our companions in sin are left to persevere in their godless career? How is it that some of us who were once drunkards, swearers, and the like, are now sitting here to praise the God of Israel this day? Was there anything good in us that moved the heart of God to save us? God forbid that we should indulge the blasphemous thought. There was nothing in us that made us better than others, or more deserving. Sometimes we are apt to think that it was the reverse. There was much in us that might have caused God to pass us by if he had looked to us. And yet, here we are, praising his name. Tell me, ye that deny divine sovereignty, how is it that the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while the self-righteous Pharisee is shut out? How is it that from the scum and draft of this city, God picks up some of his brightest jewels, while among the learned and philosophic, there are very few that bow the knee to the God of Israel? Tell me, how is it that in heaven there are more servants than masters, more poor than rich, more foolish than learned? What shall we say of this?--"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

2. But if there be sovereignty in the choice, I cannot omit another thought akin to it. What undeservingness there was in the person! She was no Hannah. I read not that she had smitten the Lord's enemies, like Jael, or had forsaken the gods of her country, like Ruth. She was no

more notable than any other heathen. Her idolatry was as vile as theirs, and her mind as foolish and vain as that of the rest of her countrymen. Ah, and in the objects too, of God's love there is nothing whatever that can move his heart to love them; nothing of merit, nothing which could move him to select them. Hark! how the blood-bought ones all sing before the throne. They cast their crowns at the feet of Jehovah, and unitedly say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory for ever." There is no divided note in heaven upon this matter. Not one spirit in glory will dare to say that he deserved to come there. They were strangers once, and they were sought by grace. They were black, and they were washed in blood. Their hearts were hard, and they were softened by the Spirit. They were dead, and they were quickened by divine life. And all the reasons for this gracious work in and upon them are to be found in the breast of God, and not at all in them. Simple as this truth seems, and lying as it does at the very basement of the gospel system, yet how often is it forgotten! Ah! men and brethren, ye are saying, "I would come to Christ if I had a better character. I think that God would love me if there were some good works, and some redeeming traits in my character." Nay, but hear me, my brother, God loveth not man for anything in man. The saved ones are not saved on account of anything they did; but simply because he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion. Thou art in as good a place as say other unregenerate sinner on the face of the earth; why should not God have mercy upon thee? Thy merits or thy demerits have nought to do with the matter. If God intends to bless, he looks not to what thou art. He finds his motive in the depth of his own loving will, and not in thee. Oh! canst thou believe it, that black, and filthy, and diseased, and leprous though thou be, the love of God can shed itself abroad in thy

heart? O my trembling hearer! do not despair, for he is able to save unto the very uttermost.

3. In continuing to regard this woman, I want you to notice that her condition was miserable too, in the very last degree. She had not only to suffer the famine which had fallen upon all her neighbors, but her husband was taken from her. He would have shared with her the last morsel that his weary limbs could earn; he would have bidden her lean her head upon his strong and faithful breast, and would have said, "My wife, if there be bread to be had thy mouth shall taste it; if there be water to drink thou shalt not thirst." But alas! he was taken from her, and she was a widow. Besides this, he had left her no inheritance. She had no patrimony, no servant. You learn this from the fact that she had not even firewood. Now, there was no reason why she should not have had that even in time of famine of bread, for there was no famine of wood, unless she had been extremely poor. Such was her extremity that she goes outside the city upon the common lands to pick up a few sticks with which she may cook her meal. She had, you see then, nothing wherewithal to buy bread, for even the fuel she must gather for herself. I told you that her husband had left her nothing, yes, he had left her something; but that something, though much beloved, was but another fountain of trouble to her. He had left her a son, her only son, and this son has now to share her starvation. I believe he was too weak to accompany his mother upon this occasion. They had been so long without food that he could not rise from the bed, or else, good soul, she would have brought him with her, and he could have helped to gathers few sticks. But she had laid him upon the bed, fearing that he might die before she reached her home, knowing that he could not accompany her because his limbs were too feeble to carry the little weight of his own poor emaciated body. And now she has come forth with

a double trouble, to gather a handful of sticks to dress her last meal, that she may eat it and die.

Ah, my dear friends, this is just where sovereign grace finds us all--in the depth of poverty and misery. I do not mean, of course, temporal poverty, but I mean spiritual distress. So long as we have a full barrel of our own merits, God will have nothing to do with us. So long as the cruse of oil is full to overflowing, we shall never taste the mercy of God. For God will not fill us until we are emptied of self. Ah, what misery does conviction of sin cause in the breast of the sinner. I have known some so wretched, that all the torments of the inquisition could not equal their agony. If tyrants could invent the knife, the hot irons, the spear, splinters put beneath the nails, and the like, yet could not they equal the torment which some men have felt when under conviction of sin. They have been ready to make an end of themselves. They have dreamed of hell by night, and when they have awakened in the morning it was to feel what they have dreamed. But then it has been in this very time when all their hope was gone, and their misery was come to its utmost extremity, that God looked down in love and mercy on them. Have I such a hearer in this crowd this morning? Have I not one who is smitten in his heart, whose life is blasted, who walks about in the weariness of his spirit, crying, "Oh, that I were gone out of this world, that I might be rid of sin; for oh, my burden presses upon me as though it would sink me to the lowest hell. My sin is like a millstone round my neck and I cannot get rid of it." My hearer, I am glad to hear thee speak thus; I rejoice in thy unhappiness; and that not because I love to see thee miserable, but because this sorrow of thine is a step to everlasting blessedness. I am glad that thou art poor, for there is one that will make thee rich. I am glad that barrel of meal of thine is wasted, for now shall a miracle

of mercy be wrought for thee, and thou shalt eat the bread of heaven to the full. I am glad that cruse of oil is gone, for now rivers of love and mercy shall be bestowed on thee. Only believe it. In God's name I assure thee, if thou art brought to extremity God will now appear for thee. Look up, sinner--look away from thyself--look up to God who sits upon the throne, a God of love. But if that be too high for thee, look up sinner to yon cross. He that hangs there died for such as thou art. Those veins were opened for sinners utterly ruined and undone. That agony he suffered was for those who feel an agony of heart like thine. His griefs he meant for the grievers, his mourning made atonement for the mourners. Canst thou now believe the word which is written?--"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Darest thou trust thyself now upon the merits of Christ? Canst thou say, "Sink or swim, my hope is in the cross." Oh, sinner, if God but help thee to do this, thou art a happy man. Thy poverty shall be removed, and like the widow of Sarepta, thou shalt know no lack until the day when God shall take thee up to heaven, where thou shalt be satisfied throughout eternity.

I do not know whether I have made what I intended to state sufficiently clear but what I wanted to bring out is this;--Just as God sent his prophet Elijah out of pure sovereignty to a woman who deserved nothing at his hands, and just as he sent a prophet to her in the time of her greatest misery and sorrow, so is the word of God sent to you, my hearer, this morning, if you are in a similar condition.

II. Now, I come to the second point: THE GRACE OF GOD IN ITS DEALINGS. I would have you notice first of all, that the love of God towards this woman in its dealings was of the most singular character, You will notice that the first word this poor woman heard from the God of Israel was one which rather robbed her than made her rich. It was this: "Fetch

me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel that I may drink." It was taking something from that already much-diminished store. And then on the heels of that there came another: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." This was rather demanding than bestowing. And yet singular it is, this is just the way sovereign mercy deals with men. It is an apparent demand rather than an open gift. For what does God say to us when first he speaks? He says this: "Repent and be converted every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." But saith the soul, "I cannot repent, it is beyond my power; I cannot believe--I would that I could believe--but this is beyond my reach. And has God asked me to exert a strength which I have not? Does he demand that of me which I cannot give? I thought that he gave; I did not know that he asked of me." Ay but soul, notice what this woman did in obedience to the command. She went and fetched the water, and she brought the morsel of bread; and the water was not diminished by what she gave, and the bread itself was increased in the spending of it. When God saith to the sinner, "Believe," if that sinner believeth, it is not by his own power, but by grace which goes with the command. But the sinner does not know that at first. He thinks that he believes: he thinks that he repents. Why, I do not believe that the meal which the woman brought to the prophet was any meal of hers: it was meal taken out of her store, and yet not taken out of it; it was meal given her by miracle--the first installment of miraculous provision. And so if thou believest, thou wilt say, "I have believed." Yes it was taken out of your barrel, but still it was not your believing, it was an; act of faith wrought in you. Here is a poor man with a withered arm: he wants to have that restored. Now, you will imagine that the first thing Christ will say to him will be, "Man, I will make thy withered arm alive; I will once more

nerve it so that thou shalt have power to lift it." Nay, he does not say any such thing. But before he gives the man the power he says to him, "Stretch out thy hand!" Suppose he had cried out, "Sir, I cannot;" his withered arm would have hung dangling at his side till he died. But instead of that the command came; the man had the will to obey, and suddenly he had the power, for he stretched out his withered hand. What! say you, did he stretch out that hand of his own might! No, and yet he was commanded to do it. And so if you are willing to believe, if now your hearts say, "I would believe, I would repent," the power shall come with the will, and the withered hand shall be stretched out.

I do preach continually the exhortation and the command. I am not ashamed to say with the prophet Ezekiel, "Ye dry bones live! ye dead souls live." If this is esteemed unsound doctrine, I shall be yet more heretical. "Man cannot do it; why tell him to do it?" Why simply as an exercise of faith. If I tell a man to do what he can do, anybody can tell him that; but God's servant tells him to do what he cannot do, and the man does it; for God honors the command of his servant, and gives the strength with the command. To sinners dead in sin the cry is given this morning: "Do you want salvation? Believe on Christ. Would you have your sins forgiven? Look to him." Oh! do not answer, "I cannot believe, I cannot look." Instead thereof, may the Spirit of God incline your mind, so that you may say, "I will believe," and then you will believe. O may you say, "I will repent." and then you will repent. And though it be not your own strength, it will be a strength given so instantly upon the moment that you for a time will not know whether it is your strength or God's strength, until you get further advanced in the divine life, and then you will discover that all the strength from first to last is of God. I say that the dealings of divine grace with this woman are to be looked upon as extremely singular in that light.

And yet they are but the type and the model of the dealings of God with all whom he saves.

3. Now, the next point. The dealings of love with this poor woman were not only singular, but exceedingly trying. The first thing she hears is a trial: Give away some of that water which thy son and thyself so much require! Give away a portion of that last little cake which ye intended to eat and die! Nay, all through the piece it was a matter of trial, for there never was more in the barrel than there was at the first. There was a handful at night, and a handful the next morning; but there never were two handfuls there at a time. To the very last there was nothing but just a little oil in the cruse. Whenever she looked at it, there was only a little glazing of oil to spread upon the meal cakes. The cruse was never full, there was not a drop more in it than there was at first. So that this woman the first time she had eaten the meal out of the barrel, might have thought to herself, "Well, I have breakfasted in a most extraordinary manner, but where shall I find food at noon." But when she went there was just one handful more. She took that out and prepared it, and unbelief would have whispered, "But there will be none at eventide." But, however, when night came there was just enough for the hour. The barrel never filled, and yet it never emptied. The store was little, but it was always sufficient for the day.

Now, if God saves us, it will be a trying matter. All the way to heaven, we shall only get there by the skin of our, teeth. We shall not go to heaven sailing along with sails swelling to the breeze, like sea birds with their white wings but we shall proceed full often with sails rent to ribbons, with masts creaking, ands the ship's pumps at work both by night and day. We shall reach the city at the shutting of the gate, but not an hour before. O believer, thy Lord will bring thee safe to the end of thy pilgrimage; but mark, thou wilt never have one

particle of strength to waste in wantonness upon the road. There will be enongh to get thee up the hill Difficulty, but only enough then by climbing on your hands and knees. You will have strength enough to fight Apollyon, but when the battle is over your arm will have no strength remaining. Your trials will be so many, that if you had only one trial more, it would be like the last ounce that breaks the camel's back, But, nevertheless, though God's love should thus try you all the journey through, your faith will bear the trying, for while God dashes you down to the earth with one hand in providence, he will lift you up with the other in grace. You will have consolation and affliction weighed out in equal degree, ounce for ounce, and grain for grain; you will be like the Israelite in the wilderness, if you gather much manna, you will have nothing over; while blessed be God, if you gather little you shall have no lack. You shall have daily grace for daily trials.

From this interesting topic, I turn to another that is not less so. Although the Lord's dealings with this woman of Sarepta were very trying, yet they were very wise. Ye ask me--Why did not God give her a granary full of meal at once, and a vat full of oil instanter? I will tell you. It was not merely because of God's intent to try her, but there was wisdom here. Suppose he had given her a granary full of meal, how much of it would have been left by the next day? I question whether any would have remained, for in days of famine men are sharp of scent, and it would soon have been noised about the city, "The old widow woman who lives in such-and-such a street, has a great store of food." Why, they would have caused a riot, and robbed the house, and perhaps, have killed the woman and her son. She would have been despoiled of her treasure, and in four and twenty hours the barrel of meal would have been as empty as it was at first, and the cruse of oil would have been spilled upon the ground. What has that to do with us? Just this if the

Lord should give us more grace than we want for the day, we should have all the devils in hell trying to rob us. We have enough to do, as it is, to fight with Satan. But what an uproar there would be! We should have tens of thousands of enemies pouncing upon our stock of grace, and we should have to defend our stock against all these assailants. Now, I think while it is good for us to have a little ready money on hand, to let our real sterling property remain in the hands of our great Banker above. Should thieves break in, as they often do, and steal my evidences and take away my comforts--they only take a few loose coppers, that I have in the house for convenience, they cannot steal my real treasure, for it is secured in a golden casket, the key of which swings at the girdle of the Lord Jesus Christ. Better for you to have an inheritance preserved in heaven for you, than to have it given to you to take care of for yourself; for you would soon lose it and become as poor as ever.

Besides, there was another reason why this woman had not her meal given to her all at once. Any meal-man knows that meal will not keep in great quantities. It soon breeds a peculiar kind of worm, and after a little while it grows musty, and no person would think of eating it. Now, grace is just of the same character. If you have a stock of grace, it breeds a worm called pride. Perhaps you may have seen that worm. It is a very prolific one. I find whenever I have a little extra stock of gifts, or grace, that this worm is sure to breed in the meal, and then soon it begins to smell musty, and is only fit for the dunghill. If we had more grace than we want, it would be like the manna of old, which when it was laid up, bred worms and stank. Besides, how much better it would be, even if it would keep, to have it fresh and fresh every day. Oh, to have the bread of heaven hot from heaven's oven every day! To have the water out of the rock, not as sailors have it in the casks for

a long sea voyage, where the sweetest water ferments, and passes through many stages of decay; but, oh, to have it every hour trickling through the divine rock! to have it fresh from the divine fountain every moment, this is to have a happy life indeed.

This woman need never regret having nothing but a handful on hand, for she had thus the greater inducement to be frequent in her pleadings with God. After she had taken out a handful of meal, I think I see her lifting up her streaming eyes and saving, "Great God, it is now two years since for the first time I put the hand of faith into this barrel, and now every morning, and every noon, and every night, I have done the same, and I have never lacked. Glory be unto the God of Israel!" I think I see her praying as she went:--"Oh, Lord, shut not up the bowels of thy compassion. Thou hast dealt well with thy poor servant, and fed her this many a year. Grant that the barrel may not fail me now, for I have no stock in hand; grant that there may be a handful still to spare--always enough, always all that my necessities can require." Do you not see that she was thus brought into constant contact with God. She had more reasons for prayer, and more reasons for gratitude, than if she had received the blessing at once. This is one, reason why God does not give you grace to spare. He will have you come to him every day, nay, every hour. "Are you not glad of the plea? You can say each time you come, "Lord, here's a needy beggar at the door, it is not an idle man that is giving a runaway knock at the door of prayer, but, Lord, I am a needy soul: I want a blessing and I come."

I repeat it, the daily journey to the well of mercy is good for us. The hand of faith is blessed by the exercise of knocking at the gate. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a right good prayer; O for grace to use it daily with our Father who is in heaven!

Now, what is the drift of all this? Just this: among the thousands of

letters that I continually receive from my congregation, I meet with this very common question:--"Oh, Sir, I feel such little faith, such little life, such little grace in my heart, that I am inclined to think I shall never hold out to the end, and sometimes I am afraid I am not a child of God at all." Now, my dear friend, if you want an explanation of this it is to be found in the text. You shall have just enough to carry you through your trials, but you shall have no faith to spare. You shall have just enough grace in your heart to keep you living day after day in the fear of God, but you shall have none to sacrifice to your boasting and yield to your own pride. I am glad to hear you say that you feel your spiritual poverty; for when we know ourselves to be poor, then we are rich, but when we think that we are rich and increased in goods, then we are naked, and poor, and miserable, and are in a sad plight indeed. Oh, I want you to remember for your comfort, that though you have never two handfuls of meal in the barrel at a time, yet there will never be less than one handful; that though you will never have a double quantity of oil at one time, yet there will always be the requisite quantity. There will be nothing over, but there shall be none lacking. So take this for your comfort, as your days so shall your strength be; as your needs so shall your grace be; as the demands of your necessity, such shall be the supply of God's mercy. The cup shall be full if it does not flow over, and the stream shall always run, even though it is not always brimming the banks.

III. I conclude by bringing you to the point upon which I shall dwell but briefly--for I pray that your life may be a far fuller sermon on this text than I can hope to preach--THE FAITHFULNESS OF DIVINE LOVE. "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord. which he spake by Elijah." You will observe that this woman had daily necessities. She had three mouths to

feed; she had her herself, her son, and the prophet Elijah. But though the need was threefold, yet the supply of meal wasted not. Boys have large appetites, and no doubt her son very speedily devoured that first little cake. As for Elijah himself, he had walked no less a distance than one hundred miles; all weary with his journey, you may consider that he had a considerable appetite also; whilst she herself, having been long subjected to starvation, would doubtless feed to the full. But though their necessities were very great at the first, yet the barrel of meal wasted not. Each day she made calls upon it, but yet each day it remained the same. Now brethren, you have daily necessities. Because they come so frequently--because your trials are so many, your troubles so innumerable, you are apt to conceive that the barrel of meal will one day be empty, and the cruse of oil will fail you. But rest assured that according to the Word of God this shall not be the case. Each day, though it bring its trouble shall bring its help; though it bring its temptation it shall bring its succor; though it bring its need it shall bring its supply; and though day come after day, if you should live to outnumber the years of Methuselah, and though troubles come after troubles till your tribulations are like the waves of the sea, yet shall God's grace and mercy last through all your necessities, and you shall never know a lack. For three long years the heavens never saw a cloud, and the stars never wept the holy tears of dew upon the wicked earth; for three long years the women fainted in the streets, and devoured their own offspring for straitness of bread; for three long years the mourners went about the streets, wan, and weary, like skeletons following corpses to the tomb; but this woman never was hungry, never knew a lack; always supplied, always joyful in abundance. So shall it be with you. You shall see the sinner die, for he trusts his native strength; you shall see the proud Pharisee totter,

for he builds his hope upon the sand; you shall see even your own schemes blasted and withered, but you yourself shall find that your place of defense shall be the munition of rocks; your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure. The staff on which you lean shall never break; the arm on which you repose shall never be palsied; the eye that looks on you shall never wax dim; the heart that loves you shall never grow weary; and the hand that supplies you shall never be weak. Do you not remember a time in your experience, not long ago, when you came to your wits' end? You said, "I shall surely fall by the hands of the enemy." Have you fallen? Are you not still preserved? Look back I pray you. It is not many months ago since business was running so dead against you, that you said, "I must give it up; ever since I have known the Lord I have had more trials than ever I had before." Have you given it up? You have gone through fires; let me ask you, have you been burnt? has there been a hair of your head singed? You have walked through waters--and deep waters have they been--have you been drowned? You said you should be, but have you? Have the water floods overflowed you? When all God's waves and God's billows had rolled over you, were you destroyed? Did they wash out your hope? Did your confidence give way? You once went down, as it were, into a very sea of trouble, and you thought you would have been drowned therein like Egypt of old. Did not the water-floods divide before you? did not the depths stand upright as a heap, and were not the floods congealed in the heart of the sea? You have had high mountains in your path, and you hare said, "I can never traverse this road, the mountains are too steep." But have you not climbed them, and let me ask you have you not been benefited by the climb? When you have stood upon their hoary summit, has not the view of your knowledge become wider? has not the breath of your prayer become purer, and freer? Say ye, have not your visits to the cold

mountains of affliction strengthened you, and braced you for more glorious efforts than before? Now, then, let the past console the future. Snatch a torch from the altars of the past, and re-kindle the dying embers of to-day. He that has been with you in time past, will not leave you in time to come. He is God; he changeth not, he will not forsake you. He is God; he lieth not, he cannot leave you. He has sworn by himself, because he can swear by no greater, so that by two immutable things--his oath and his promise--we might have strong consolation, who have fled to the refuge to lay hold of the hope that is set before us. Though the barrel of meal hold but a scanty supply, though the cruse of oil contain but a drop, that meal shall last thee to the end, that cruse of oil, miraculously multiplied, hour by hour, shall be sufficient until thou shalt gather up thy feet in the bed, and with good old Jacob, end thy life with a song, praising and blessing the angel that hath redeemed thee out of all evil.

Now, having thus addressed myself to the children of God, I hope to their comfort, I wish to say just a word or two to those whom I have come here with the hope of blessing this morning--those of you who know nothing of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. What would you think of the condition of the man who can say, and say truly too, without a blush or stammer, "I know that I am the object of God's eternal love; I know that he has put all my sins behind his back, and that I stand before him as accepted and as much beloved as if I had never sinned." What would you say if that man could confidently add, "I know that this shall be my position in time and in eternity. God so loves me that he cannot cease to love me. He will preserve me whatever be my troubles or temptations, and I shall see his face, and shall rejoice in his love eternally." Why, you answer, "If I could say that, I would give all that I am worth; if I were worth a thousand worlds I

would give them all to say that." Is it, then, an unattainable thing? Is it so high beyond your reach? I tell you, and the witness that I bear is true, there are tens of thousands of men on the face of God's earth that enjoy this state. Not always can they say as much, but still they enjoy it year after year continually. There are some of us that know what it is to have no doubt as to our eternal state. At times we tremble, but at other times we can say "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him unto that day." Again I hear you say, "Would to God I could say that." Well, my dear hearer, it is possible that thou shalt say it ere long; nay, to-night it may be, ere sleep shall close thy eyelets thou mayest be among the happy men. "No," saith one, "but I am the chief of sinners." Yes, but Christ is the Savior of the chief of sinners. "Nay," says another, "but my character is so had, my disposition is so evil." The Holy Ghost can change your disposition, can renew your will, and make you a new man in Christ." "Well," says a third, "I can understand that I may be pardoned, but I cannot think that I shall ever know it." That is the glory of the religion of Christ, that he not only forgives, but he tells you so: he sheds abroad in your heart a sweet consciousness of acceptance in him; so that you know better than if an angel could tell you, that you are now one of the family of God, that all your sins are gone, and that every good thing is yours by an eternal covenant. Again, saith a fourth, "I would that I could have it." Well, sinner, it is in thy way. Dost thou feel and know thyself to be undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving? Then all that is asked of thee is that thou wouldst simply confess thy sin to God; acknowledge that thou hast been guilty, and then cast thyself flat on thy face before the cross of Christ. He is able to save thee, sinner, for he is able to save to the very uttermost all that come unto God by

him.

May God the Holy Spirit now send the word home, and may some who have been poor as the widow of Sarepta, now find a miraculous supply of grace through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

Chapter 5

A Christmas Question

A Sermon

(No. 291)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, December 25th, 1859, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."--Isaiah 9:6.

UPON OTHER OCCASIONS I have explained the main part of this verse--"the government shall be upon his shoulders, his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." If God shall spare me, on some future occasion I hope to take the other titles, "The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." But now this morning the portion which will engage our attention is this, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." The sentence is a double one, but it has in it no tautology. The careful reader will soon discover a distinction; and it is not a distinction without a difference. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." As Jesus Christ is a child in his human nature, he is born, begotten of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. He is as truly-born, as certainly a child, as any other man that ever lived upon the face of the earth. He is thus in his humanity a child born. But as Jesus Christ is God's Son, he is not born; but given, begotten of his Father from before all worlds, begotten--not made, being of the same substance with the Father. The doctrine of the eternal affiliation of Christ is to be received as an undoubted truth of our holy religion. But as to any explanation of it, no man should venture thereon, for it remaineth among the deep things of God--one of those solemn mysteries indeed, into which the angels dare not look, nor

do they desire to pry into it--a mystery which we must not attempt to fathom, for it is utterly beyond the grasp of any finite being. As well might a gnat seek to drink in the ocean, as a finite creature to comprehend the Eternal God. A God whom we could understand would be no God. If we could grasp him he could not be infinite: if we could understand him, then were he not divine. Jesus Christ then, I say, as a Son, is not born to us, but given. He is a boon bestowed on us, "For God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world." He was not born in this world as God's Son, but he was sent, or was given, so that you clearly perceive that the distinction is a suggestive one, and conveys much good truth to us. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

This morning, however, the principal object of my discourse, and, indeed, the sole one, is to bring out the force of those two little words, "unto us." For you will perceive that here the full force of the passage lies. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given."

The divisions of my discourse are very simple ones. First, is it so? Secondly, if it is so, what then? Thirdly, if it is not so, what then?

I. In the first place, IS IT SO? Is it true that unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given? It is a fact that a child is born. Upon that I use no argument. We receive it as a fact, more fully established than any other fact in history, that the Son of God became man, was born at Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. It is a fact, too, that a Son is given. About that we have no question. The infidel may dispute, but we, professing to be believers in Scripture, receive it as an undeniable truth, that God has given his only begotten Son to be the Savior of men. But the matter of question is this: Is this child born to us? Is he given to us? This is the matter of anxious enquiry. Have we a personal interest in the child

that was born at Bethlehem? Do we know that he is our Savior?--that he has brought glad tidings to us?--that to us he belongs? and that we belong to him? I say this is matter of very grave and solemn investigation. It is a very observable fact, that the very best of men are sometimes troubled with questions with regard to their own interest in Christ, while men who never are troubled at all about the matter are very frequently presumptuous deceivers, who have no part in this matter. I have often observed that some of the people about whom I felt most sure, were the very persons who were the least sure of themselves. It reminds me of the history of a godly man named Simon Brown, a minister in the olden times in the City of London. He became so extremely sad in heart, so depressed in spirit, that at last he conceived the idea that his soul was annihilated. It was all in vain to talk to the good man, you could not persuade him that he had a soul; but all the time he was preaching, and praying, and working, more like a man that had two souls than none. When he preached, his eyes poured forth plenteous floods of tears, and when he prayed, there was a divine fervor and heavenly prevalence in every petition. Now so it is with many Christians. They seem to be the very picture of godliness; their life is admirable, and their conversation heavenly, but yet they are always crying,--

"Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his or am I not?

So does it happen, that the best of men will question while the worst of men will presume. Ay, I have seen the men about whose eternal destiny I had serious questioning, whose inconsistencies in life were palpable and glaring, who have prated concerning their sure portion in

Israel, and their infallible hope, as though they believed others to be as easily duped as themselves. Now, what reason shall we give for this foolhardiness? Learn it from this illustration: You see a number of men riding along a narrow road upon the edge of the sea. It is a very perilous path, for the way is rugged and a tremendous precipice bounds the pathway on the left. Let but the horse's foot slip once, and they dash downwards to destruction. See how cautiously the riders journey, how carefully the horses place their feet. But do you observe yon rider, at what a rate he dashes along, as if he were riding a steeple-chase with Satan? You hold up your hands in an agony of fear, trembling lest every moment his horse's foot should slip, and he should be dashed down; and you say, why so careless a rider? The man is a blind rider on a blind horse. They cannot see where they are. He thinks he is on a sure road, and therefore it is that he rides so fast. Or to vary the picture; sometimes when persons are asleep, they take to walking and they will climb where others will not think of venturing. Giddy heights that would turn our brain seem safe enough to them. So there be many spiritual sleep-walkers in our midst, who think that they are awake. But they are not. Their very presumption in venturing to the high places of self-confidence, proves that they are somnambulists; not awake, but men who walk and talk in their sleep. It is, then, I say, really a matter of serious questioning with all men who would be right at last, as to whether this child is born to us, and this Son given to us?

I shall now help you to answer the question.

1. If this child who now lies before the eyes of your faith, wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem's manger, is born to you, my hearer, then you are born again! For this child is not born to you unless you are born to this child. All who have an interest in Christ are, in the

fullness of time, by grace converted, quickened, and renewed. All the redeemed are not yet converted, but they will be. Before the hour of death arrives their nature shall be changed, their sins shall be washed away, they shall pass from death unto life. If any man tells me that Christ is his Redeemer, although he has never experienced regeneration, that man utters what he does not know; his religion is vain, and his hope is a delusion. Only men who are born again can claim the babe in Bethlehem as being theirs. "But" saith one, "how am I to know whether I am born again or not?" Answer this question also by another: Has there been a change effected by divine grace within you? Are your loves the very opposite of what they were? Do you now hate the vain things you once admired, and do you seek after that precious pearl which you at one time despised? Is your heart thoroughly renewed in its object? Can you say that the bent of your desire is changed? that your face is Zionward, and your feet set upon the path of grace? that whereas your heart once longed for deep draughts of sin, it now longs to be holy? and whereas you once loved the pleasures of the world, they have now become as draff and dross to you, for you only love the pleasures of heavenly things, and are longing to enjoy more of them on earth, that you may be prepared to enjoy a fullness of them hereafter? Are you renewed within? For mark, my hearer, the new birth does not consist in washing the outside of the cup and platter, but in cleansing the inner man. It is all in vain to put up the stone upon the sepulcher, wash it extremely white, and garnish it with the flowers of the season; the sepulcher itself must be cleansed. The dead man's bones that lie in that charnel-house of the human heart must be cleansed away. Nay, they must be made to live. The heart must no longer be a tomb of death, but a temple of life. Is it so with you, my hearer? For recollect, you may be very different in the outward, but if you are not changed in the

inward, this child is not born to you.

But I put another question. Although the main matter of regeneration lies within, yet it manifests itself without. Say, then, has there been a change in you in the exterior? Do you think that others who look at you would be compelled to say, this man is not what he used to be? Do not your companions observe a change? Have they not laughed at you for what they think to be your hypocrisy, your puritanism, your sternness? Do you think now that if an angel should follow you into your secret life, should track you to your closet and see you on your knees, that he would detect something in you which he could never have seen before? For, mark, my dear hearer, there must be a change in the outward life, or else there is no change within. In vain you bring me to the tree, and say that the tree's nature is changed. If I still see it bringing forth wild grapes, it is a wild vine still. And if I mark upon you the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah you are still a tree accursed and doomed, notwithstanding all your fancied experience. The proof of the Christian is in the living. To other men, the proof of our conversion is not what you feel, but what you do. To yourself your feelings may be good enough evidence, but to the minister and others who judge of you, the outward walk is the main guide. At the same time, let me observe that a man's outward life may be very much like that of a Christian, and yet there may be no religion in him at all. Have you ever seen two jugglers in the street with swords, pretending to fight with one another? See how they cut, and slash, and hack at one another, till you are half afraid there will soon be murder done. They seem to be so very much in earnest that you are half in the mind to call in the police to part them. See with what violence that one has aimed a terrific blow at the other one's head, which his comrade dexterously warded off by keeping a well-timed guard. Just watch them a minute, and

you will see that all these cuts and thrusts come in a prearranged order. There is no heart in the fighting after all. They do not fight so roughly as they would if they were real enemies. So, sometimes I have seen a man pretending to be very angry against sin. But watch him a little while, and you will see it is only a fencer's trick. He does not give his cuts out of order, there is no earnestness in his blows, it is all pretense, it is only mimic stage-play. The fencers, after they have ended their performance, shake hands with one another, and divide the coppers which the gaping throng have given them; and so does this man do, he shakes hands with the devil in private, and the two deceivers share the spoil. The hypocrite and the devil are very good friends after all, and they mutually rejoice over their profits: the devil leering because he has won the soul of the professor, and the hypocrite laughing because he has won his pelf. Take care, then, that your outward life is not a mere stage-play, but that your antagonism to sin is real and intense; and that you strike right and left, as though you meant to slay the monster, and cast its limbs to the winds of heaven.

I will just put another question. If thou hast been born again, there is another matter by which to try thee. Not only is thy inward self altered, and thy outward self too, but the very root and principle of thy life must become totally new. When we are in sin we live to self, but when we are renewed we live to God. While we are unregenerate, our principle is to seek our own pleasure, our own advancement; but that man is not truly born again who does not live with a far different aim from this. Change a man's principles, and you change his feelings, you change his actions. Now, grace changes the principles of man. It lays the axe at the root of the tree. It does not saw away at some big limb it does not try to alter the sap; but it gives a new root, and plants

us in fresh sold. The man's inmost self, the deep rocks of his principles upon which the topsoil of his actions rest, the soul of his manhood is thoroughly changed, and he is a new creature in Christ. "But," says one, "I see no reason why I should be born again." Ah, poor creature, it is because thou hast never seen thyself. Didst thou ever see a man in the looking-glass of the Word of God--what a strange monster he is. Do you know, a man by nature has his heart where his feet ought to be:--that is to say, his heart is set upon the earth, whereas he ought to be treading it beneath his feet; and stranger mystery still, his heels are where his heart should be:--that is to say, he is kicking against the God of heaven when he ought to be setting his affections on things above. Man by nature when he sees clearest, only looks down, can only see that which is beneath him, he cannot see the things which are above; and strange to say the sunlight of heaven blinds him; light from heaven he looks not for. He asks for his light in darkness. The earth is to him his heaven, and he sees suns in its muddy pools and stars in its filth. He is, in fact, a man turned upside down. The fall has so ruined our nature, that the most monstrous thing on the face of the earth is a fallen man. The ancients used to paint griffins, gryphons, dragons, chimeras, and all kinds of hideous things; but if a skillful hand could paint man accurately none of us would look at the picture, for it is a sight that none ever saw except the lost in hell; and that is one part of their intolerable pain, that they are compelled always to look upon themselves Now, then, see you not that ye must be born again, and unless ye are so this child is not born to you.

2. But I go forward. If this child is born to you, you are a child, and the question arises, are you so? Man grows from childhood up to manhood naturally; in grace men grow from manhood down to childhood; and the

nearer we come to true childhood, the nearer welcome to the image of Christ. For was not Christ called "a child," even after he had ascended up to heaven? "Thy holy child Jesus." Brethren and sisters, can you say that you have been made into children? Do you take God's Word just as it stands, simply because your heavenly Father says so? Are you content to believe mysteries without demanding to have them explained? Are you ready to sit in the infant class, and be a little one? Are you willing to hang upon the breast of the church, and suck in the unadulterated milk of the Word--never questioning for a moment what your divine Lord reveals, but believing it on his own authority, whether it seemed to be above reason, or beneath reason, or even contrary to reason? Now, "except ye be converted and become as little children," this child is not born to you; except like a child you are humble, teachable, obedient, pleased with your Father's will and willing to assign all to him, there is grave matter of question whether this child is born to you. But what a pleasing sight it is to see a man converted and made into a little child. Many times has my heart leaped for joy, when I have seen a giant infidel who used to reason against Christ, who had not a word in his dictionary bad enough for Christ's people come by divine grace to believe the gospel. That man sits down and weeps, feels the full power of salvation and from that time drops all his questionings becomes the very reverse of what he was. He thinks himself meaner than the meanest believer. He is content to do the meanest work for the church of Christ, and takes his station--not with Locke or Newton, as a mighty Christian philosopher--but with Mary as a simple learner, sitting at Jesus' feet, to hear and learn of him. If ye are not children, then this child is not born to you.

3. And now let us take the second sentence and put a question or two upon that. Is this son given to us? I pause a minute to beg your

personal attention. I am trying, if I may, so to preach that I may make you all question yourselves. I pray you let not one of you exempt himself from the ordeal but let each one ask himself, if it true that unto me a Son is given? Now, if this Son is given to you, you are a son yourself. "For unto as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God." "Christ became a Son that in all things he might be made like unto his brethren." The Son of God is not mine to enjoy, to love, to delight in, unless I am a son of God too. Now, my hearer, have you a fear of God before your eyes--a filial fear, a fear which a child has lest it should grieve its parent? Say have you a child's love to God? Do you trust to him as your father, your provider, and your friend? Have you in your breast "The spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father?" Are there times with you when on your knees you can say, "My Father and my God." Does the Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God? and while this witness is born, does your heart fly up to your Father and to your God, in ecstacy of delight to clasp him who long ago hath clasped you in the covenant of his love, in the arms of his effectual grace? Now, mark my hearer, if thou dost not sometimes enjoy the spirit of adoption, if thou art not a son or daughter of Zion, then deceive not thyself, this Son is not given to thee.

4. And, then, to put it in another shape. If unto us a Son is given, then we are given to the Son. Now, what say you to this question also? Are you given up to Christ? Do you feel that you have nothing on earth to live for but to glorify him? Can you say in your heart, "Great God, if I be not deceived I am wholly thine?" Are you ready to-day to write over again your consecration vow? Canst thou say, "Take me! All that I am and all I have, shall be for ever thine. I would give up all my goods, all my powers, all my time, and all my hours, and thine I would

be--wholly thine." "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price." And if this Son of God be given to you, you will have consecrated yourself wholly to him; and you will feel that his honor is your life's object, that his glory is the one great desire of your panting spirit. Now is it so, my hearer? Ask thyself the question. I pray thee, and do not deceive thyself in the answer.

I will just repeat the four different proofs again. If unto me a child is born then I have been born again; and, moreover, I am now in consequence of that new birth, a child. If, again, a Son has been given to me, then I am a son; and again I am given to that Son who is given to me. I have tried to put these tests in the way that the text would suggest them. I pray you carry them home with you. If you do not recollect the words, yet do recollect to search yourselves, and see, my hearers, whether you can say, "Unto me this Son is given." For, indeed, if Christ is not my Christ, he is of little worth to me. If I cannot say he loved me and gave himself for me, of what avail is all the merit of his righteousness, or all the plenitude of his atonement? Bread in the shop is well enough, but if I am hungry and cannot get it, I starve although granaries be full. Water in the river is well enough but if I am in a desert and cannot reach the stream, if I can hear it in the distance and am yet lying down to die of thirst, the murmuring of the rill, or the flowing of the river, helps to tantalize me, while I die in dark despair. Better for you, my hearers to have perished as Hottentots, to have gone down to your graves as dwellers in some benighted land, than to live where the name of Christ is continually hymned and where his glory is extolled, and yet to go down to your tombs without an interest in him, unblessed by his gospel, unwashed in his blood, unclothed of his robe of righteousness. God help you, that you may be blessed in him, and may sing sweetly "Unto us a child is

born, unto us a Son is given."

II. This brings me to my second head, upon which I shall be brief. Is it so? IF IT IS SO, WHAT THEN? If it is so, why am I doubtful to-day? Why is my spirit questioning? Why do I not realize the fact? My hearer, if the Son is given to thee, how is it that thou art this day asking whether thou art Christ's, or not? Why dost thou not labor to make thy calling and election sure? Why tarriest thou in the plains of doubt? Get thee up, get thee up to the high mountains of confidence, and never rest till thou canst say without a fear that thou art mistaken, "I know that my Redeemer liveth. I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." I may have a large number of persons here to whom it is a matter of uncertainty as to whether Christ is theirs or not. Oh, my dear hearers, rest not content unless you know assuredly that Christ is yours, and that you are Christ's. Suppose you should see in to-morrow's newspaper, (although, by the way, if you believed anything you saw there you would probably be mistaken) but suppose you should see a notification that some rich man had left you an immense estate. Suppose, as you read it, you were well aware that the person mentioned was a relative of yours, and that it was likely to be true. It may be you have prepared to-morrow for a family meeting, and you are expecting brother John and sister Mary and their little ones to dine with you. But I very much question whether you would not be away from the head of the table to go and ascertain whether the fact were really so. "Oh," you could say, "I am sure I should enjoy my Christmas dinner all the better if I were quite sure about this matter;" and all day, if you did not go, you would be on the tip-toe of expectation; you would be, as it were, sitting upon pins and needles until you knew whether it were the fact or not. Now there is a proclamation gone forth to-day, and it is a true one, too, that Jesus

Christ has come into the world to save sinners. The question with you is whether he has saved you, and whether you have an interest in him. I beseech you, give no sleep to your eyes, and no slumber to your eyelids, till you have read your "title clear to mansions in the skies." What, man! shall your eternal destiny be a matter of uncertainty to you? What! is heaven or hell involved in this matter, and will you rest until you know which of these shall be your everlasting portion? Are you content while it is a question whether God loves you, or whether he is angry with you? Can you be easy while you remain in doubt as to whether you are condemned in sin, or justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus? Get thee up, man. I beseech thee by the living God, and by thine own soul's safety, get thee up and read the records. Search and look, and try and test thyself, to see whether it be so or not. For if it be so, why should not we know it? If the Son is given to me, why should not I be sure of it? If the child is born to me, why should I not know it for a certainty, that I may even now live in the enjoyment of my privilege--a privilege, the value of which I shall never know to the full, till I arrive in glory?

Again, if it be so, another question. Why are we sad? I am looking upon faces just now that appear the very reverse of gloomy, but mayhap the smile covers an aching heart. Brother and sister, why are we sad this morning, if unto us a child is born, if unto us a Son is given? Hark, hark to the cry! It is "Harvest home! Harvest home!" See the maidens as they dance, and the young men as they make merry. And why is this mirth? Because they are storing the precious fruits of the earth, they are gathering together unto their barns wheat which will soon be consumed. And what, brothers and sisters have we the bread which endureth to eternal life and are we unhappy? Does the worldling rejoice when his corn is increased, and do we not rejoice when, "Unto us a

child is born, and unto us a Son is given?" Hark, yonder! What means the firing of the Tower guns? Why all this ringing of bells in the church steeples, as if all London were mad with joy? There is a prince born; therefore there is this salute, and therefore are the bells ringing. Ah, Christians, ring the bells of your hearts, tire the salute of your most joyous songs, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." Dance, O my heart, and ring out peals of gladness! Ye drops of blood within my veins dance every one of you! Oh! all my nerves become harp strings, and let gratitude touch you with angelic fingers! And thou, my tongue, shout--shout to his praise who hath said to thee--"Unto thee a child is born, unto thee a Son is given." Wipe that tear away! Come, stop that sighing! Hush yon murmuring. What matters your poverty? "Unto you a child is born." What matters your sickness? "Unto you a Son is given." What matters your sin? For this child shall take the sin away, and this Son shall wash and make you fit for heaven. I say, if it be so,

"Lift up the heart, lift up the voice,
Rejoice aloud! ye saints rejoice!"

But, once more, if it be so, what then? Why are our hearts so cold? and why is it that we do so little for him who has done so much for us? Jesus, art thou mine? Am I saved? How is it that I love thee so little? Why is it that when I preach I am not more in earnest, and when I pray I am not more intensely fervent? How is it that we give so little to Christ who gave himself for us? How is it that we serve him so sadly who served us so perfectly? He consecrated himself wholly; how is it that our consecration is marred and partial? We are continually sacrificing to self and not to him?

O beloved brethren, yield yourselves up this morning. What have you got in the world? "Oh," saith one, "I have nothing; I am poor and

penniless, and all but homeless." Give thyself to Christ. You have heard the story of the pupils to a Greek philosopher. On a certain day it was the custom to give to the philosopher a present. One came and gave him gold. Another could not bring him gold but brought him silver. One brought him a robe, and another some delicacy for food. But one of them came up, and said, "Oh, Solon, I am poor, I have nothing to give to thee, but yet I will give thee something better than all these have given; I give thee myself." Now, if you have gold and silver, if you have aught of this world's goods, give in your measure to Christ; but take care, above all, that you give yourself to him, and let your cry be from this day forth,

"Do not I love thee dearest Lord?
Oh search my heart and see,
And turn each cursed idol out
That dares to rival thee.
Do not I love thee from my soul?
Then let me nothing love:
Dead be my heart to every joy,
When Jesus cannot move."

III. Well, now I have all but done, but give your solemn, very solemn attention, while I come to my last head:--IF IT IS NOT SO, WHAT THEN? Dear hearer, I cannot tell where thou art--but wherever thou mayst be in this hall, the eyes of my heart are looking for thee, that when they have seen thee, they may weep over thee. Ah! miserable wretch, without a hope, without Christ, without God. Unto thee there is no Christmas mirth, for thee no child is born; to thee no Son is given. Sad is the story of the poor men and women, who during the week before last fell down dead in our streets through cruel hunger and bitter cold. But far more pitiable is thy lot, far more terrible shall be thy condition in

the day when thou shalt cry for a drop of water to cool thy burning tongue, and it shall be denied thee; when thou shalt seek for death, for grim cold death--seek for him as for a friend, and yet thou shalt not find him. For the fire of hell shall not consume thee, nor its terrors devour thee. Thou shalt long to die, yet shalt thou linger in eternal death--dying every hour, yet never receiving the much coveted boon of death. What shall I say to thee this morning? Oh! Master, help me to speak a word in season, now. I beseech thee, my hearer, if Christ is not thine this morning, may God the Spirit help thee to do what I now command thee to do. First of all, confess thy sins; not into my ear, nor into the ear of any living man. Go to thy chamber and confess that thou art vile. Tell him thou art a wretch undone without his sovereign grace. But do not think there is any merit in confession. There is none. All your confession cannot merit forgiveness, though God has promised to pardon the man who confesses his sin and forsakes it. Imagine that some creditor had a debtor who owed him a thousand pounds. He calls upon him and says, "I demand my money." But, says the other, "I owe you nothing." That man will be arrested and thrown into prison. However, his creditor says, "I wish to deal mercifully with you, make a frank confession, and I will forgive you all the debt." "Well," says the man, "I do acknowledge that I owe you two hundred pounds." "No," says he, "that will not do." "Well, sir, I confess I owe you five hundred pounds," and by degrees he comes to confess that he owes the thousand. Is there any merit in that confession? No; but yet you could see that no creditor would think of forgiving a debt which was not acknowledged. It is the least that you can do, to acknowledge your sin; and though there be no merit in the confession, yet true to his promise, God will give you pardon through Christ. That is one piece of advice. I pray you take it. Do not throw it to the winds; do not leave

it as soon as you get out of Exeter Hall. Take it with you, and may this day become a confession-day with many of you. But next, when you have made a confession, I beseech you renounce yourself. You have been resting perhaps in some hope that you would make yourself better, and so save yourself. Give up that delusive fancy. You have seen the silk-worm: it will spin, and spin, and spin, and then it will die where it has spun itself a shroud. And your good works are but a spinning for yourself a robe for your dead soul. You can do nothing by your best prayers, your best tears, or your best works, to merit eternal life.

Why, the Christian who is converted to God, will tell you that he cannot live a holy life by himself. If the ship in the sea cannot steer itself aright, do you think the wood that lies in the carpenter's yard can put itself together, and make itself into a ship, and then go out to sea and sail to America? Yet, this is just what you imagine. The Christian who is God's workmanship can do nothing, and yet you think you can do something. Now, give up self. God help you to strike a black mark through every idea of what you can do.

Then, lastly, and I pray God help you here my dear hearers, when thou hast confessed thy sin and given up all hope of self-salvation, go to the place where Jesus died in agony. Go then in meditation to Calvary. There he hangs. It is the middle cross of these three. Methinks I see him now. I see his poor face emaciated, and his visage more marred than that of any man. I see the beady drops of blood still standing round his pierced temples--marks of that rugged thorn-crown. Ah, I see his body naked--naked to his shame. We may tell all his bones. See there his hands rent with the rough iron, and his feet torn with the nails.

The nails have rent through his flesh. There is now not only the hole through which the nail was driven, but the weight of his body has sunken upon his feet, and see the iron is tearing through his flesh.

And now the weight of his body hangs upon his arms, and the nails there are rending through the tender nerves. Hark! earth is startled! He cries, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Oh, sinner, was ever shriek like that? God hath forsaken him. His God has ceased to be gracious to him. His soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. But hark, again, he cries, "I thirst!" Give him water! give him water! Ye holy women let him drink. But no, his murderers torture him. They thrust into his mouth the vinegar mingled with gall--the bitter with the sharp, the vinegar and the gall. At last, hear him, sinner, for here is your hope. I see him bow his awful head. The King of heaven dies. The God who made the earth has become a man, and the man is about to expire. Hear him! He cries, "It is finished!" and he gives up the ghost. The atonement is finished, the price is paid, the bloody ransom counted down, the sacrifice is accepted. "It is finished!" Sinner, believe in Christ. Cast thyself on him. Sink or swim, take him to be thy all in all. Throw now thy trembling arms around that bleeding body. Sit now at the feet of that cross, and feel the dropping of the precious blood. And as you go out each one of you say in your hearts,

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall,
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

God grant you grace to do so for Jesus Christ's sake. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

Chapter 6

A New Year's Benediction

A Sermon

(No. 292)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 1st, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand

"But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."--1 Peter 5:10.

THE APOSTLE PETER TURNS from exhortation to prayer. He knew that if praying be the end of preaching in the hearer, preaching should always be accompanied by prayer in the minister. Having exhorted believers to walk stedfastly, he bends his knee and commends them to the guardian care of heaven, imploring upon them one of the largest blessings for which the most affectionate heart ever made supplication. The minister of Christ is intended to execute two offices for the people of his charge. He is to speak for God to them, and for them to God. The pastor hath not fulfilled the whole of his sacred commission when he hath declared the whole counsel of God. He hath then done but half. The other part is that which is to be performed in secret, when he carrieth upon his breast, like the priest of old, the wants, the sins, the trials of his people, and pleads with God for them. The daily duty of the Christian pastor is as much to pray for his people, as to exhort, instruct, and console. There are, however, special seasons when the minister of Christ finds himself constrained to pronounce an unusual benediction over his people. When one year of trial has gone and another year of mercy has commenced, we may be allowed to express our

sincere congratulations that God has spared us, and our earnest invocations of a thousand blessings upon the heads of those whom God has committed to our pastoral charge.

I have this morning taken this text as a new year's blessing. You are aware that a minister of the Church of England always supplies me with the motto for the new year. He prays much before he selects the text, and I know that it is his prayer for you all to-day. He constantly favors me with this motto, and I always think it my duty to preach from it, and then desire my people to remember it through the year as a staff of support in their time of trouble, as some sweet morsel, a wafer made with honey, a portion of angel's food, which they may roll under their tongue, and carry in their memory till the year ends, and then begin with another sweet text. What larger benediction could my aged friend have chosen, standing as he is to-day in his pulpit, and lifting up holy hands to preach to the people in a quiet village church--what larger blessing could he implore for the thousands of Israel than that which in his name I pronounce upon you this day:--"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."

In discoursing upon this text, I shall have to remark:--first, what the apostle asks of heaven; and then, secondly, why he expects to receive it. The reason of his expecting to be answered is contained in the title by which he addresses the Lord his God--"The GOD OF ALL GRACE who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus."

I. First, then, WHAT THE APOSTLE ASKS FOR ALL TO WHOM THIS EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN. He asks for them four sparkling jewels set in a black foil. The four jewels are these:--Perfection, Establishment, Strengthening, Settling. The jet-black setting is this--"After that ye have suffered

awhile." Worldly compliments are of little worth; for as Chesterfield observes, "They cost nothing but ink and paper." I must confess, I think even that little expense is often thrown away. Worldly compliments generally omit all idea of sorrow. "A merry Christmas! A happy new year!" There is no supposition of anything like suffering. But Christian benedictions look at the truth of matters. We know that men must suffer, we believe that men are born to sorrow as the spark flieth upwards; and therefore in our benediction we include the sorrow. Nay, more than that, we believe that the sorrow shall assist in working out the blessing which we invoke upon your heads. We, in the language of Peter, say, "After that ye have suffered a while, may the God of all grace make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Understand, then, as I take each of these four jewels, that you are to look upon them, and consider that they are only desired for you "after that ye have suffered awhile." We must not discard the sufferings. We must take them from the same hand from which we receive the mercy; and the blessing bears date, "after that ye have suffered a while."

1. Now the first sparkling jewel in this ring is perfection. The apostle prays that God would make us perfect. Indeed, though this be a large prayer, and the jewel is a diamond of the first water, and of the finest size, yet is it absolutely necessary to a Christian that he should ultimately arrive at perfection. Have ye never on your bed dreamed a dream, when your thoughts roamed at large and the bit was taken from the lip of your imagination, when stretching all your wings, your soul floated through the Infinite, grouping strange and marvelous things together, so that the dream rolled on in something like supernatural splendor? But on a sudden you were awakened, and you have regretted hours afterwards that the dream was never concluded. And what is a Christian, if he do not arrive at perfection, but an unfinished

dream? A majestic dream it is true, full of things that earth had never known if it had not been that they were revealed to flesh and blood by the Spirit. But suppose the voice of sin should startle us ere that dream be concluded, and if as when one awaketh, we should despise the image which began to be formed in our minds, what were we then? Everlasting regrets, a multiplication of eternal torment must be the result of our having begun to be Christians, if we do not arrive at perfection. If there could be such a thing as a man in whom sanctification began but in whom God the Spirit ceased to work, if there could be a being so unhappy as to be called by grace and to be deserted before he was perfected, there would not be among the damned in hell a more unhappy wretch. It were no blessing for God to begin to bless if he did not perfect. It were the grandest curse which Omnipotent hatred itself could pronounce, to give a man grace at all, if that grace did not carry him to the end, and land him safely in heaven. I must confess that I would rather endure the pangs of that dread archangel, Satan, throughout eternity, than have to suffer as one whom God once loved, but whom he cast away. But such a thing shall never be. Whom once he hath chosen he doth not reject. We know that where he hath begun a good work he will carry it on, and he will complete it until the day of Christ. Grand is the prayer, then, when the apostle asks that we may be perfected. What were a Christian if he were not perfected? Have you never seen a canvas upon which the hand of the painter has sketched with daring pencil some marvellous scene of grandeur? You see where the living color has been laid on with an almost superhuman skill. But the artist was suddenly struck dead, and the hand that worked miracles of art was palsied, and the pencil dropped. Is it not a source of regret to the world that ever the painting was commenced, since it was never finished? Have you never

seen the human face divine starting out from the chiselled marble? You have seen the exquisite skill of the sculptor, and you have said within yourself, "What a marvellous thing will this be! what a matchless specimen of human skill!" But, alas! it never was completed, but was left unfinished. And do you imagine, any of you, that God will begin to sculpture out a perfect being and not complete it? Do you think that the hand of divine wisdom will sketch the Christian and not fill up the details? Hath God taken us as unhewn stones out of the quarry, and hath he begun to work upon us, and show his divine art, his marvellous wisdom and grace and will he afterwards cast us away? Shall God fail? Shall he leave his works imperfect? Point, if you can, my hearers, to a world which God has cast away unfinished. Is there one speck in his creation where God hath begun to build but was not able to complete? Hath he made a single angel deficient? Is there one creature over which it cannot be said, "This is very good?" And shall it be said over the creature twice made--the chosen of God, the blood-bought--shall it be said, "The Spirit began to work in this man's heart, but the man was mightier than the Spirit, and sin conquered grace; God was put to rout, and Satan triumphed, and the man was never perfected?" Oh, my dear brethren, the prayer shall be fulfilled. After that ye have suffered a while, God shall make you perfect, if he has begun the good work in you.

But, beloved, it must be after that ye have suffered awhile. Ye cannot be perfected except by the fire. There is no way of ridding you of your dross and your tin but by the names of the furnace of affliction. Your folly is so bound up in your hearts, ye children of God, that nothing but the rod can bring it out of you. It is through the blueness of your wounds that your heart is made better. Ye must pass through tribulation, that through the Spirit it may act as a refining fire to

you; that pure, holy, purged, and washed, ye may stand before the face of your God, rid of every imperfection, and delivered from every corruption within.

2. Let us now proceed to the second blessing of the benediction--establishment. It is not enough even if the Christian had received in himself a proportional perfection, if he were not established. You have seen the arch of heaven as it spans the plain: glorious are its colors, and rare its hues. Though we have seen it many and many a time, it never ceases to be "A thing of beauty and a joy for ever." But alas for the rainbow, it is not established. It passes away and lo it is not. The fair colors give way to the fleecy clouds, and the sky is no longer brilliant with the tints of heaven. It is not established. How can it be? A thing that is made of transitory sunbeams and passing rain-drops, how can it abide? And mark, the more beautiful the vision, the more sorrowful the reflection when that vision vanishes, and there is nothing left but darkness. It is, then, a very necessary wish for the Christian, that he should be established. Of all God's known conceptions, next to his incarnate Son, I do not hesitate to pronounce a Christian man the noblest conception of God. But if this conception is to be but as the rainbow painted on the cloud, and is to pass away for ever, woe worth the day that ever our eyes were tantalized with a sublime conception that is so soon to melt away. What is a Christian man better than the flower of the field, which is here to day, and which withers when the sun is risen with fervent heat, unless God establish him--what is the difference between the heir of heaven, the blood-bought child of God, and the grass of the field? Oh, may God fulfill to you this rich benediction, that you may not be as the smoke out of a chimney, which is blown away by the wind: that your goodness may not be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which

passeth away; but may ye be established, may every good thing that you have be an abiding thing. May your character be not a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock. May your faith be no "baseless fabric of a vision," but may it be builded of stone that shall endure that awful fire which shall consume the wood, hay, and stubble of the hypocrite. May ye be rooted and grounded in love. May your conviction be deep. May your love be real. May your desires be earnest. May your whole life be so settled, fixed and established, that all the blasts of hell and all the storms of earth shall never be able to remove you. You know we talk about some Christian men as being old established Christians. I do fear there are a great many that are old, who are not established. It is one thing to have the hair whitened with years, but I fear it is another thing for us to obtain wisdom. There be some who grow no wiser by all their experience. Though their fingers be well rapped by experience, yet have they not learned in that school. I know there are many aged Christians who can say of themselves, and say it sorrowfully too, they wish they had their opportunities over again, that they might learn more, and might be more established. We have heard them sing--

"I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide."

The benediction however of the apostle is one which I pray may be fulfilled in us whether we be young or old, but especially in those of you who have long known your Lord and Savior. You ought not now to be the subject of those doubts which vex the babe in grace. Those first principles should not always be laid again by you: but you should be going forward to something higher. You are getting near to heaven; oh, how is it that you have not got to the land Beulah yet? to that land which floweth with milk and honey? Surely your wavering in beseemeth

those grey hairs. Methought they had been whitened with the sunlight of heaven. How is it that some of the sunlight does not gleam from your eyes? We who are young look up to you old-established Christians; and if we see you doubting, and hear you speaking with a trembling lip then we are exceedingly cast down. We pray for our sakes as well as for yours, that this blessing may be fulfilled in you, that you may be established; that you may no longer be exercised with doubt; that you may know your interest in Christ, that you may feel you are secure in him; that resting upon the rock of ages you may know that you cannot perish while your feet are fixed there. We do pray, in fact, for all, of whatever age, that our hope may be fixed upon nothing less than Jesu's blood and righteousness, and that it may be so firmly fixed that it may never shake; but that we may be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed, and which abideth for ever.

Thus have I remarked upon the second blessing of this benediction. But mark, we cannot have it until after we have suffered a while. We cannot be established except by suffering. It is of no use our hoping that we shall be well-rooted if no March winds have passed over us. The young oak cannot be expected to strike its roots so deep as the old one. Those old gnarlings on the roots, and those strange twistings of the branches, all tell of many storms that have swept over the aged tree. But they are also indicators of the depths into which the roots have dived; and they tell the woodman that he might as soon expect to rend up a mountain as to tear up that oak by the roots. We must suffer a while, then shall we be established.

3. Now for the third blessing, which is strengthening. Ah, brethren, this is a very necessary blessing too for all Christians. There be some whose characters seem to be fixed and established. But still they lack force and vigor. Shall I give you a picture of a Christian without

strength? There he is. He has espoused the cause of King Jesus. He hath put on his armor; he hath enlisted in the heavenly host. Do you observe him? He is perfectly panoplied from head to foot, and he carries with him the shield of faith. Do you notice, too, how firmly he is established? He keeps his ground, and he will not be removed. But notice him. When he uses his sword it falls with feeble force. His shield, though he grasps it as firmly as his weakness will allow him, trembles in his grasp. There he stands, he will not move, but still how tottering is his position. His knees knock together with affright when he heareth the sound and the noise of war and tumult. What doth this man need? His will is right, his intention is right, and his heart is fully set upon good things. What doth he need? Why he needeth strength. The poor man is weak and childlike. Either because he has been fed on unsavoury and unsubstantial meat, or because of some sin which has straitened him, he has not that force and strength which ought to dwell in the Christian man. But once let the prayer of Peter be fulfilled to him, and how strong the Christian becomes. There is not in all the world a creature so strong as a Christian when God is with him. Talk of Behemoth! he is but as a little thing. His might is weakness when matched with the believer. Talk of Leviathan that maketh the deep to be hoary! he is not the chief of the ways of God. The true believer is mightier far than even he. Have you never seen the Christian when God is with him? He smelleth the battle afar off, and he cries in the midst of the tumult, "Aha! aha! aha!" He laugheth at all the hosts of his enemies. Or if you compare him to the Leviathan--if he be cast into a sea of trouble, he lashes about him and makes the deep hoary with benedictions. He is not overwhelmed by the depths, nor is he afraid of the rocks; he has the protection of God about him, and the floods cannot drown him; nay, they become an element of delight to him, while

by the grace of God he rejoiceth in the midst of the billows. If you want a proof of the strength of a Christian you have only to turn to history, and you can see there how believers have quenched the violence of fire, have shut the mouths of lions, have shaken their fists in the face of grim death, have laughed tyrants to scorn, and have put to flight the armies of aliens, by the all-mastering power of faith in God. I pray God, my brethren, that he may strengthen you this year. The Christians of this age are very feeble things. It is a remarkable thing that the great mass of children now-a-days are born feeble. You ask me for the evidence of it. I can supply it very readily. You are aware that in the Church of England Liturgy it is ordered and ordained that all children should be immersed in baptism except those that are certified to be of a weakly state. Now, it were uncharitable to imagine that persons would be guilty of falsehood when they come up to what they think to be a sacred ordinance; and, therefore, as nearly all children are now sprinkled, and not immersed, I suppose they are born feeble. Whether that accounts for the fact that all Christians are so feeble I will not undertake to say, but certain it is that we have not many gigantic Christians now-a-days. Here and there we hear of one who seems to work all but miracles in these modern times, and we are astonished. Oh that ye had faith like these men! I do not think there is much more piety in England now than there used to be in the days of the Puritans. I believe there are far more pious men; but while the quantity has been multiplied, I fear the quality has been depreciated. In those days the stream of grace ran very deep indeed. Some of those old Puritans, when we read of their devotion, and of the hours they spent in prayer, seem to have as much grace as any hundred of us. The stream ran deep. But now-a-days the banks are broken down, and great meadows have been flooded therewith. So far so good. But while the

surface has been enlarged I fear the depth has been frightfully diminished. And this may account for it, that while our piety has become shallow our strength has become weak. Oh, may God strengthen you this year! But remember, if he does do so, you will then have to suffer. "After that ye have suffered a while," may he strengthen you. There is sometimes an operation performed upon horses which one must consider to be cruel--the firing of them to make their tendons strong. Now, every Christian man before he can be strengthened must be fired. He must have his nerves and tendons braced up with the hot iron of affliction. He will never become strong in grace, unless it be after he has suffered a while.

4. And now I come to the last blessing of the four--"Settling." I will not say that this last blessing is greater than the other three, but it is a stepping-stone to each; and strange to say, if is often the result of a gradual attainment of the three preceding ones. "Settle you!" Oh, how many there are that are never settled. The tree which should be transplanted every week would soon die. Nay, if it were moved, no matter how skilfully, once every year, no gardener would expect fruit from it. How many Christians there be that are transplanting themselves constantly, even as to their doctrinal sentiments. There be some who generally believe according to the last speaker; and there be others who do not know what they do believe, but they believe almost anything that is told them. The spirit of Christian charity, so much cultivated in these days, and which we all love so much, has, I fear, assisted in bringing into the world a species of latitudinarianism; or in other words, men have come to believe that it does not matter what they do believe; that although one minister says it is so, and the other says it is not so; yet we are both right; that though we contradict each other flatly, yet we are both correct. I know not where men have had

their judgments manufactured, but to my mind it always seems impossible to believe a contradiction. I can never understand how contrary sentiments can both of them be in accordance with the Word of God, which is the standard of truth. But yet there be some who are like the weathercock upon the church steeple, they will turn just as the wind blows. As good Mr. Whitfield said, "You might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as tell their doctrinal sentiments," for they are always shifting and ever changing. Now, I pray that this may be taken away from any of you, if this be your weakness, and that you may be settled. Far from us be bigotry removed; yet would I have the Christian know what he believes to be true and then stand to it. Take your time in weighing the controversy, but when you have once decided, be not easily moved. Let God be true though every man be a liar, and stand to it, that what is according to God's Word one day cannot be contrary to it another day, that what was true in Luther's day and Calvin's day must be true now; that falsehoods may shift, for they have a Protean shape; but the truth is one, and indivisible, and evermore the same. Let others think as they please. Allow the greatest latitude to others, but to yourself allow none. Stand firm and steadfast by that which ye have been taught, and ever seek the spirit of the apostle Paul, "If any man preach any other gospel than that which we have received, let him be accursed." If, however, I wished you to be firm in your doctrines, my prayer would be that you may be especially settled in your faith. You believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and you rest in him. But sometimes your faith wavers, then you lose your joy and comfort. I pray that your faith may become so settled that it may never be a matter of question with you, whether Christ is yours or not, but that you may say confidently, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." Then I pray that

you may be settled in your aims and designs. There are many Christian people who get a good idea into their heads, but they never carry it out, because they ask some friend what he thinks of it. "Not much," says he. Of course he does not. Whoever did think much of anybody else's idea? And at once the person who conceived it gives it up, and the work is never accomplished. How many a man in his ministry has begun to preach the gospel, and he has allowed some member of the church, some deacon possibly, to pull him by one ear, and he has gone a little that way. By-and-bye, some other brother has thought fit to pull him in the other direction. The man has lost his manliness. He has never been settled as to what he ought to do; and now he becomes a mere lacquey, waiting upon everybody's opinion, willing to adopt whatever anybody else conceives to be right. Now, I pray you be settled in your aims. See what niche it is that God would have you occupy. Stand in it, and don't be got out of it by all the laughter that comes upon you. If you believe God has called you to a work, do it. If men will help you thank them. If they will not, tell them to stand out of your road or be run over. Let nothing daunt you. He who will serve his God must expect sometimes to serve him alone. Not always shall we fight in the ranks. There are times when the Lord's David must fight Goliath singly, and must take with him three stones out of the brook amid the laughter of his brethren, yet still in his weapons is he confident of victory through faith in God. Be not moved from the work to which God has put you. Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not. Be ye settled. Oh, may God fulfill this rich blessing to you.

But you will not be settled unless you suffer. You will become settled in your faith and settled in your aims by suffering. Men are soft molluscous animals in these days. We have not the tough men that know

they are right and stand to it. Even when a man is wrong one does admire his conscientiousness when he stands up believing that he is right and dares to face the frowns of the world. But when a man is right, the worst thing he can have is inconstancy, vacillation, the fear of men. Hurl it from thee O knight of the holy cross, and be firm if thou wouldst be victorious. Faint heart never stormed a city yet, and thou wilt never win nor be crowned with honor, if thy heart be not steeled against every assault and if thou be not settled in thy intention to honor thy Master and to win the crown.

Thus have I run through the benediction.

II. I come now, asking your attention for a few minutes more, to observe THE REASONS WHY THE APOSTLE PETER EXPECTED THAT HIS PRAYER WOULD BE HEARD. He asked that they might be made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled. Did not Unbelief whisper in Peter's ear, "Peter, thou askest too much. Thou wast always headstrong. Thou didst say Bid me come upon the water.' Surely, this is another instance of thy presumption. If thou hadst said, Lord, make them holy,' had it not been a sufficient prayer? Hast thou not asked too much?" "No," saith Peter; and he replies to Unbelief, "I am sure I shall receive what I have asked for; for I am in the first place asking it of the God of all grace--the God of all grace." Not the God of the little graces we have received already alone, but the God of the great boundless grace which is stored up for us in the promise, but which as yet we have not received in our experience. "The God of all grace;" of quickening grace, of convincing grace, of pardoning grace, of believing grace, the God of comforting, supporting, sustaining grace. Surely, when we come to him we cannot come for too much. If he be the God, not of one grace, or of two graces, but of all graces, if in him there is stored up an infinite, boundless, limitless supply, how can we ask too much, even

though we ask that we may be perfect? Believer, when you are on your knees, remember you are going to a king. Let your petitions be large. Imitate the example of Alexander's courtier, who when he was told he might have whatever he chose to ask as a reward for his valor, asked a sum of money so large that Alexander's treasurer refused to pay it until he had first seen the monarch. When he saw the monarch, he smiled and said, "It is true it is much for him to ask, but it is not much for Alexander to give. I admire him for his faith in me; let him have all he asks for." And dare I ask that I may be perfect, that my angry temper may be taken away, my stubbornness removed, my imperfections covered? May I ask that I may be like Adam in the garden--nay more, as pure and perfect as God himself? May I ask, that one day I may tread the golden streets, and "With my Savior's garments on, holy as the holy one," stand in the mid-blaze of God's glory, and cry, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Yes, I may ask it; and I shall have it, for he is the God of all grace.

Look again at the text, and you see another reason why Peter expected that his prayer would be heard:--"The God of all grace who hath called us." Unbelief might have said to Peter, "Ah, Peter, it is true that God is the God of all grace, but he is as a fountain shut up, as waters sealed." "Ah," saith Peter, "get thee hence Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God. It is not a sealed fountain of all grace, for it has begun to flow"--"The God of all grace hath called us." Calling is the first drop of mercy that trickleth into the thirsty lip of the dying man. Calling is the first golden link of the endless chain of eternal mercies. Not the first in order of time with God, but the first in order of time with us. The first thing we know of Christ in his mercy, is that he cries, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden," and that by his sweet Spirit he addresses us, so that we

obey the call and come to him. Now, mark, if God has called me, I may ask him to stablish and keep me; I may ask that as year rolls after year my piety may not die out, I may pray that the bush may burn, but not be consumed, that the barrel of meal may not waste, and the cruse of oil may not fail. Dare I ask that to life's latest hour I may be faithful to God, because God is faithful to me? Yes, I may ask it, and I shall have it too: because the God that calls, will give the rest.

"For whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Think of thy calling Christian, and take courage, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." If he has called thee he will never repent of what he has done, nor cease to bless or cease to save.

But I think there is a stronger reason coming yet:--"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory." Hath God called thee, my hearer? Dost thou know to what he has called thee? He called thee first into the house of conviction, where he made thee feel thy sin. Again he called thee to Calvary's summit, where thou didst see thy sin atoned for and thy pardon sealed with precious blood. And now he calls thee. And whither away? I hear a voice to-day--unbelief tells me that there is a voice calling me to Jordan's waves. Oh, unbelief! it is true that through the stormy billows of that sea my soul must wade. But the voice comes not from the depths of the grave, it comes from the eternal glory. There where Jehovah sits resplendent on his throne, surrounded by cherubim and seraphim, from that brightness into which angels dare not gaze, I hear a voice:--"Come unto me, thou blood-washed sinner, come unto my eternal glory." O heavens! is not this a wondrous call?--to be called to glory--called to the shining streets and pearly gates--called to the harps and to the songs of eternal happiness--and

better still, called to Jesu's bosom--called to his Father's face--called, not to eternal glory, but to HIS eternal glory--called to that very glory and honor with which God invests himself for ever? And now, beloved, is any prayer too great after this? Has God called me to heaven, and is there anything on earth he will deny me? If he has called me to dwell in heaven is not perfection necessary for me? May I not therefore ask for it? If he has called me to glory, is it not necessary that I should be strengthened to fight my way thither? May I not ask for strengthening? Nay, if there be a mercy upon earth too great for me to think of, too large for me to conceive, too heavy for my language to carry it before the throne in prayer, he will I do for me exceeding abundantly above what I can ask, or even I can think. I know he will, because he has called me to his eternal glory.

The last reason why the apostle expected that his benediction would be fulfilled was this: "Who hath called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus." It is a singular fact that no promise is ever so sweet to the believer as those in which the name of Christ is mentioned. If I have to preach a comforting sermon to desponding Christians, I would never select a text which did not enable me to lead the desponding one to the cross. Does it not seem too much to you, brethren and sisters, this morning, that the God of all grace should be your God? Does it not surpass your faith that he should actually have called you? Do you not sometimes doubt as to whether you were called at all? And when you think of eternal glory, does not the question arise, "Shall I ever enjoy it? Shall I ever see the face of God with acceptance?" Oh, beloved, when ye hear of Christ, when you know that this grace comes through Christ, and the calling through Christ, and the glory through Christ, then you say, "Lord, I can believe it now, if it is through Christ." It is not a hard thing to believe that Christ's blood was

sufficient to purchase every blessing for me. If I go to God's treasury without Christ, I am afraid to ask for anything, but when Christ is with me I can then ask for everything. For sure I think he deserves it though I do not. If I can claim his merits then I am not afraid to plead. Is perfection too great a boon for God to give to Christ? Oh, no. Is the keeping, the stability, the preservation of the blood-bought ones too great a reward for the terrible agonies and sufferings of the Savior? I trow not. Then we may with confidence plead, because everything comes through Christ.

I would in concluding make this remark. I wish, my brothers and sisters, that during this year you may live nearer to Christ than you have ever done before. Depend upon it, it is when we think much of Christ that we think little of ourselves, little of our troubles, and little of the doubts and fears that surround us. Begin from this day, and may God help you. Never let a single day pass over your head without a visit to the garden of Gethsemane, and the cross on Calvary.

And as for some of you who are not saved, and know not the Redeemer, I would to God that this very day you would come to Christ. I dare say you think coming to Christ is some terrible thing: that you need to be prepared before you come; that he is hard and harsh with you. When men have to go to a lawyer they need to tremble; when they have to go to the doctor they may fear; though both those persons, however unwelcome, may be often necessary. But when you come to Christ, you may come boldly. There is no fee required; there is no preparation necessary.

You may come just as you are. It was a brave saying of Martin Luther's, when he said, "I would run into Christ's arms even if he had a drawn sword in his hand." Now, he has not a drawn sword, but he has his wounds in his hands. Run into his arms, poor sinner. "Oh," you say, "May I come?" How can you ask the question? you are commanded to come.

The great command of the gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Those who disobey this command disobey God. It is as much a command of God that man should believe on Christ, as that we should love our neighbor. Now, what is a command I have certainly a right to obey. There can be no question you see; a sinner has liberty to believe in Christ because he is told to do so. God would not have told him to do a thing which he must not do. You are allowed to believe. "Oh," saith one, "that is all I want to know. I do believe that Christ is able to save to the uttermost. May I rest my soul on him, and say, sink or swim, most blessed Jesus, thou art my Lord?" May do it! man? Why you are commanded to do it. Oh that you may be enabled to do it. Remember, this is not a thing which you will do at a risk. The risk is in not doing it. Cast yourself on Christ, sinner. Throw away every other dependence and rest alone on him. "No," says one, "I am not prepared." Prepared! sir? Then you do not understand me. There is no preparation needed; it is, just as you are. "Oh, I do not feel my need enough." I know you do not. What has that to do with it? You are commanded to cast yourself on Christ. Be you never so black or never so bad, trust to him. He that believeth on Christ shall be saved, be his sins never so many, he that believeth not must be damned be his sins never so few. The great command of the gospel is, "Believe." "Oh," but saith one, "am I to say I know that Christ died for me?" Ah, I did not say that, you shall learn that by-and-bye. You have nothing to do with that question now, your business is to believe on Christ and trust him; to cast yourself into his hands. And may God the Spirit now sweetly compel you to do it. Now, sinner, hands off your own righteousness. Drop all idea of becoming better through your own strength. Cast yourself flat on the promise. Say--

"Just as I am without one plea,

But that thy blood was shed for me,

And that thou bid'st me come to thee;

Oh, Lamb of God! I come, I come."

You cannot trust in Christ and find him still deceive you.

Now, have I made myself plain? If there were a number of persons here in debt, and if I were to say, "If you will simply trust to me your debts shall be paid, and no creditor shall ever molest you," you would understand me directly. How is it you cannot comprehend that trusting in Christ will remove all your debts, take away all your sins, and you shall be saved eternally. Oh, Spirit of the living God, open the understanding to receive, and the heart to obey, and may many a soul here present cast itself on Christ. On all such, as on all believers, do I again pronounce the benediction, with which I shall dismiss you. "May the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you!"

Chapter 7

The King's Highway Opened and Cleared

A Sermon

(No. 293)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 8th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand

"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."--Acts. 16:31.

YOU WILL REMEMBER that when the children of Israel were settled in Canaan, God ordained that they should set apart certain cities to be called the Cities of Refuge, that to these the man-slayer might flee for security. If he killed another unawares, and had no malice aforethought, he might flee at once to the City of Refuge; and if he could enter its gates before the avenger of blood should overtake him, he would be secure. We are told by the rabbis that once in the year, or oftener, the magistrates of the district were accustomed to survey the high roads which led to these cities. they carefully gathered up all the stones, and took the greatest possible precautions that there should be no stumbling-blocks in the way which might cause the poor fugitive to fall, or might by any means impede him in his hasty course. We hear, moreover, and we believe the tradition to be grounded in fact, that all along the road there were hand-posts with the word "Refuge" written very legibly upon them, so that when the fugitive came to a crossroad, he might not need to question for a single moment which was the way of escape; but seeing the well-known word "Refuge," he kept on his breathless and headlong course until he had entered the suburb of the City of Refuge, and he was then at once completely safe.

Now, my brothers and sisters, God has prepared for the sons of men a City of Refuge, and the way to it is by FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is needful, however, that very often the ministers of Christ should survey this road, lest there should be any stumbling-blocks in the path of the poor sinner. I propose this morning to go along it, and, by God's grace, to remove any impediment which Satan may have laid upon the path, and may God so help me, that this survey may be of spiritual benefit to all your souls, that any of you who have been made to stumble in the path of faith may now pluck up courage, and run joyfully forward; hoping yet to escape from the fierce avenger of your sins. Well may the minister be careful to keep the road of faith clear for the seeking sinner, for surely the sinner hath a heavy heart to carry, and we ought to make the road as clear and as smooth as we can. We should make straight paths for the feet of these poor benighted souls. It should be our endeavor to cast loads of promises into every slough that runs across the path, that so it may be a king's highway, and may be safe and easy for travelling for those weary feet that have to carry such a heavy heart. Besides, we must remember that the sinner will make stumbling-blocks enough for himself, even with our greatest and most scrupulous care to remove any others that may naturally lie in his way. For this is one of the sad follies of the poor desponding soul--that it spoils its own road. You have sometimes seen, perhaps, the newly-invented engine in the streets, the locomotive that lays down its own pathway and then picks it up again. Now, the sinner is the very reverse of that; he spoils his own road before himself, and then carries behind him all the mire and dirt of his own mishaps. Poor soul! he flings stones before himself, cuts out valleys, and casts up mountains in his own pathway. Well may the ministers, then, be careful to keep this road clear. And, let me add there is another weighty

reason. Behind him comes the furious avenger of blood. Oh, how swift is he! There is Moses armed with all the wrath of God, and Death following hard after him--a mounted rider upon his pale horse; and after Death there cometh Hell with all the powers and legions of Satan, all athirst for blood and swift to slay. Make straight the road, oh ministers of Christ, level the mountains, fill up the valleys; for this is a desperate flight, this flight of the sinner from his ferocious enemies towards the one City of Refuge--the atonement of Jesus Christ.

I have thus given the reasons why I am compelled in spirit to make this survey this morning. Come, O Spirit, the Comforter, and help us now, that every stone may be cast out of the high road to heaven.

The road to heaven, my brethren, is BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. It is not by well-doing that you can be saved, though it is by ill-doing that you will be damned if you put not trust in Christ. Nothing that you can do can save you. Albeit that after you are saved it will be your delightful privilege to walk in the ways of God and to keep his commandments, yet all your own attempts to keep the commandments previous to faith, will but sink you deeper into the mire, and will by no means contribute to your salvation. The one road to heaven is BY FAITH IN CHRIST. Or to make it plainer still as the countryman said, there are but two steps to heaven--out of self into Christ, and, then, out of Christ into heaven. Faith is simply explained as trusting in Christ. I find that Christ commands me to believe in him, or to trust him. I feel that there is no reason in myself why I should be allowed to trust him. But he commands me to do so. Therefore altogether apart from my character or from any preparation that I feel in myself, I obey the command, and sink or swim, I trust Christ. Now, that is faith,--when with the eye shut as to all evidence of hope in ourselves, we take a leap in the dark right into the arms of an Omnipotent

Redeemer. Faith is sometimes spoken of in Scripture as being a leaning upon Christ; a casting of one's self upon him, or, as the old Puritans used to put it, (using a somewhat hard word) it is recumbency on Christ--the leaning of the whole weight upon his cross; ceasing to stand by the strength of one's own power and resting wholly upon the rock of ages. The leaving of the soul in the hands of Jesus is the very essence of faith. Faith is receiving Christ into our emptiness. There is Christ like the conduit in the market-place. As the water flows from the pipes, so does grace continually flow from him. By faith I bring my empty pitcher and hold it where the water flows, and receive of its fullness, grace for grace. It is not the beauty of my pitcher, it is not even its cleanness that quenches my thirst: it is simply holding that pitcher to the place where water flows. Even so I am but the vessel, and my faith is the hand which presents the empty vessel to the flowing stream. It is the grace, and not the qualification of the receiver which saves the soul. And though I hold that pitcher with a trembling hand, and much of that which I seek may be lost through my weakness, yet if the soul be but held to the fountain, and so much as a single drop trickle into it, my soul is saved. Faith is receiving Christ with the understanding, and with the will, submitting everything to him, taking him to be my all in all, and agreeing to be henceforth nothing at all. Faith is ceasing from the creature and coming to the Creator. It is looking out of self to Christ, turning the eye entirely from any good thing that is here within me, and looking for every blessing to those open veins, to that poor bleeding heart, to that thorn-crowned head of him whom God hath set forth "to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world."

Well, having thus described the way, I now come to my real business of

removing these stones.

1. A very common impediment in the pathway of the soul that is desiring to be saved, is the recollection of its past life. "Oh," saith the sinner, "I dare not trust Christ, because my past sins have been of an unusually black dye. I have been no common sinner, but I have been one singled out from the herd, a very monster in sin. I have taken the highest degree in the devil's college, and have become a master of Belial. I have learned to sit in the seat of the scornful, and have taught others to rebel against God." Ah, soul, I know very well what this impediment is, for once it laid in my way, and very sorely did it trouble me. Before I thought upon my soul's salvation, I dreamed that my sins were very few. All my sins were dead as I imagined, and buried in the graveyard of forgetfulness. But that trumpet of conviction which aroused my soul to think of eternal things, sounded to all my sins, and oh, how they rose up in multitudes more countless than the sands of the sea! Now, I saw that my very thoughts were enough to damn me, that my words would sink me lower than the lowest hell; and as for my acts of sin they now began to be a stench in my nostrils, so that I could not bear them. I recollect the time when I thought I had rather have been a frog or a toad than have been made a man; when I reckoned that the most defiled creature, the most loathsome and contemptible was a better thing than myself; for I had so grossly and grievously sinned against Almighty God. Ah, my brethren, it may be that this morning your old oaths are echoing back from the walls of your memory. You recollect how you have cursed God, and you say, "Can I, dare I trust him whom I have cursed?" And your old lusts are now rising before you; midnight sins stare you in the face, and snatches of the lascivious song are being yelled in the ear of your poor convinced conscience. And all your sins as they rise up, cry, "Depart, thou accursed one! Depart! thou hast

sinned thyself out of grace! Thou art a condemned one! Depart! There is no hope, there is no mercy for thee!"

Now, permit me in the strength and name of God to remove this stumbling block out of your way. Sinner, I tell thee that all thy sins, be they never so many cannot destroy thee if thou dost believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If now thou castest thyself simply on the merits of Jesus, "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Only believe. Dare to believe that Christ is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. Take him at his word and trust him. And thou hast a warrant for doing it; for remember it is written "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Thou art commanded to believe, therefore, be thou never so black a sinner, the command is, thy warrant--oh, may God help thee to obey the command. Now, just as thou art, cast thyself on Christ. It is not the greatness of the sinner that is the difficulty; it is the hardness of the sinner's heart. If now thou art conscious of the most awful guilt, thy guilt becomes as nothing in the eye of God when once he sees the blood of Christ sprinkled upon thee. I tell thee more, if thy sins were ten thousand times as many as they be, yet the blood of Christ is able to atone for them all. Only dare to believe that. Now, by a venturesome faith trust thyself in Christ. If thou art the most sick of all the wretches that ever this divine physician essayed to cure, so much the more glory to him. When a physician cures a man of some little finger-ache or some little disease, what credit doth he get? But when he heals a man who is all over diseased, who has become but a putrid mass, then there is glory to the physician. And so will there be to Christ when he saveth thee. But to put this block out of the way once for all. Remember, sinner, that all the while thou dost not believe in Christ, thou art adding to thy sin this great sin of not believing,

which is the greatest sin in the world. But if thou obey God in this matter of putting thy trust in Christ, God's own Word is guaranteed that thy faith shall be rewarded, and thou shalt find that thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee. By the side of Saul of Tarsus and of her, out of whom was cast seven devils, shalt thou one day stand. With the thief shalt thou sing of love divine, and with Manasseh shalt thou rejoice in him who can wash away the foulest crimes. Oh, I pray God there may be some one in this great crowd today, who may be saying in his heart, "Sir, you have described me. I do feel that I am the blackest sinner anywhere, but I will risk it, I will put my trust in Christ and Christ alone." Ah, soul, God bless thee; thou art an accepted one. If thou canst do this, this morning, I will be God's hostage that he will be true to thee and true to his Son, for never sinner perished yet that dared to trust the precious blood of Christ.

2. Now let me endeavor to upheave and eject another stumbling block. Many an awakened sinner is troubled because of the hardness of his heart and the lack of what he thinks to be true penitence. "Oh," saith he, "I can believe that however great my sins are they can be forgiven, but I do not feel the evil of my sins as I ought:"--

"My heart how dreadful hard it is;
How heavy here it lies!
Heavy and cold within my breast,
Just like a rock of ice."

"I cannot feel," says one, "I cannot weep, I have heard of the repentance of others, but I seem to be just like a stone. My heart is petrified, it will not quake at all the thunders of the law, it will not melt before all the wooings of Christ's love." Ah, poor heart, this is a common stumbling-block in the way of those who are really seeking Christ. Bat let me ask thee one question. Dost thou read anywhere in

the Word of God that those who have hard hearts are not commanded to believe? Because if thou canst find such a passage as that, I will be sorry enough to see it, but then I may excuse thee for saying, "I cannot trust Christ because my heart is hard." Do you not know that the Scripture runs thus? "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, if thou believest, though thy heart be never so hard, thy believing saves thee; and what is more, thy believing shall yet soften thy heart. If thou canst not feel thy need of a Savior as thou wouldst, remember that when thou hast a Savior thou wilt begin then to find out more and more how great was thy need of him. Why, I believe that many persons find out their needs by receiving the supply. Have you never walked along the street, and looking in at a shop window have seen an article, and have said, "Why, that is just what I want." How do you know that? Why, you saw the thing and then you wanted it. And I believe there is many a sinner who when he is hearing about Christ Jesus is led to say, "That is just what I want." Did not he know it before? No, poor soul, not till he saw Christ. I find my sense of need of Christ is ten times more acute now than it was before I found Christ. I thought I wanted him for a good many things then, but now I know I want him for everything. I thought there were some things which I could not do without him; but now I find that without him I can do nothing. But you say, "Sir, I must repent before I come to Christ." Find such a passage in the Word if you can. Doth not the Word say? "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Doth not one of our hymns translate that verse into rhyme and put it thus?

"True belief and true repentance.
Every grace that brings us nigh--
Without money

Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

Oh, these graces are not of nature's spinning. We cannot make these in the loom of the creature. If you would know your need of Christ, take him now by faith and sense and feeling shall follow in the rear. Trust him now for everything. Dare to trust him. Hard as your heart is, say, "Just as I am, without a plea, but that thou commandest me, and bid'st me come, I come to thee!" Thy heart shall be softened by the sight of Christ, and love divine shall so sweetly commend itself to thee, that the heart which terrors could not move shall be dissolved by love.

Do understand me, my dear hearers. I wept to preach in the broadest manner I possibly can this morning the doctrine that we are justified by faith alone; that man is commanded to believe, and that altogether apart from anything in man, man has a right to believe. Not from any preparation that he feels, not from anything good he discerns in himself, but he has a right to believe simply because he is commanded to believe; and it; relying upon the fact that he is commanded, God the Holy Spirit enables him to believe, that faith will surely save the soul, and deliver him from the wrath to come. Let me take up, then, that stumbling stone about hardness of heart. Oh, soul, trust Christ and thy heart shall be softened. And may God the Holy Spirit enable thee to trust him hard heart and all, and then thy hard heart shall soon be turned into a heart of flesh, and thou shalt love him who hath loved thee.

3. Now, for a third stumbling block. "Oh," saith some poor soul, "I do not know whether I believe or not, sir. Sometimes I do believe; but oh, it is such little faith I have that I cannot think Christ can save me."

Ah, there you are again you see, looking to yourself. This has made many trip and fall. I pray God I may put this out of your way. Poor sinner, remember it is not the strength of thy faith that saves thee,

but the reality of thy faith. What is more, it is not even the reality of thy faith that saves thee, it is the object of thy faith. If thy faith be fixed on Christ, though it seems to be in itself a line no thicker than a spider's cobweb, it will hold thy soul throughout time and eternity. For remember it is not the thickness of this cable of faith, it is the strength of the anchor which imparts strength to the cable, and so shall hold thy ship in the midst of the most fearful storm. The faith that saves man is sometimes so small that the man himself cannot see it. A grain of mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, and yet if thou hast but that quantity of faith, thou art a saved man. Remember what the poor women did. She did not come and take hold of Christ's person with her hand, she did not throw her arms about his knees; but she stretched out her finger, and then--she did not touch Christ's feet or even his dress--she touched but the ravelling, the fringe of his garment and she was made whole. If thy faith be but as little as that, seek to get more of it, but still remember that it will save thee. Jesus Christ himself compares Little-faith to a smoking flax. Does it burn? is there any fire at all! No; there is nothing but a little smoke and that is most offensive. "Yes," saith Jesus, "but I will not quench it." Again, he compares it to a bruised reed. Of what service is it? It is broken, you cannot bring music from it; it is but a, reed when it is whole, and now it is a bruised reed. Break it, snap it, throw, it away? "No," says he. "I will not break the bruised reed." Now, if that is the faith thou hast, the faith of the smoking flax, the faith of the bruised reed, thou art saved. Thou wilt have many a trial and many a trouble in going to heaven, with so little faith as that, for when there is little wind to a boat there must be much tugging at the oar; but still there will be wind enough to land thee in glory, if thou dost simply trust Christ, be that trust never so feeble. Remember

a little child belongs to the human race as much as the greatest giant; and so a babe in grace is as truly a child of God as is Mr. Great-heart, who can fight all the giants on the road. And thou mays't be as much an heir of heaven in thy minority, in the infancy of thy grace, as thou wilt be when thou shalt have expanded into the full grown Christian, and shalt become a perfect man in Christ Jesus. It is not, I tell thee, the strength of thy faith, but the object of thy faith. It is the blood, not the hyssop; not the hand that smites the lintel, but the blood that secures the Israelite in the day when God's vengeance passes by. Let that stumbling block be taken out of the way.

4. "But," saith another, "I do think sometimes I have a little faith, but I have so many doubts and fears. I am tempted every day to believe that Jesus Christ did not die for me, or that my belief is not genuine, or that I never experienced the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. Tell me Sir, can I be a true believer in Christ if I have doubts and fears?" My answer is simply this, there is no Scripture which saith, that "He that believeth, shall be damned, if that faith be mixed: with doubts." "He that believeth shall be saved," be that faith never so little, and even though it be intermingled with multitudes of doubts and fears. You remember that memorable story of our Savior, when he was on board a ship with his disciples. The winds roared, the ship rocked to and fro, the mast was strained, the sails were rent, and the poor disciples were full of fear:--"Lord save us or we perish." Here were doubts. What did Jesus say when he rebuked them? "Why are ye fearful"--O ye of no faith? No, "O ye of little faith." So there maybe little faith where there are great doubts. There is light at eventide in the air; even though there is a great deal of darkness, yet there is light. And if thy faith should never come to noon-day, if it do but come to twilight, thou art a saved man. Nay, more, if it doth not come

to twilight, if thy faith is but starlight, nay, candlelight, nay, a spark--if it be but a glow-worm spark, thou art saved; and all thy doubts, and all thy fears, and thy distresses, terrible though they may be, can never trample thee in the dust, can never destroy thy soul. Do you not know that the best of God's children are exercised with doubts and fears even to the last? Look at such a man as John Knox. There was a man who could face the frowns of a world, who could speak like a king to kings, and fear no man; yet on his dying bed he was troubled about his interest in Christ, because he was tempted to self-righteousness. If such a man have doubts, dost thou expect to live without them? If God's brightest saints are exercised, if Paul himself keeps under his body lest he should be a castaway, why how canst thou expect to live without clouds? Oh, my dear man, drop the idea that the prevalence of thy doubts disproves the truth of the promise. Again believe; away with all thy doubts; sink or swim; cast thyself on Jesus; and thou canst not be lost, for his honor is engaged to save every soul that puts its trust in him.

5. "Ah," says another, "but you have not yet hit upon my fear." I used when I first knew the Savior, to try myself in a certain manner, and often did I throw stumbling blocks in my path through it, and therefore I can speak very affectionately to any of you who are doing the same. Sometimes I would go up into my chamber, and by way of self-examination, I used to ask myself this question--Am I afraid to die? If I should drop down dead in my chamber, can I say that I should joyfully close my eyes? Well, it often happened that I could not honestly say so. I used to feel death would be a very solemn thing. Ah, then I said "I have never believed in Christ, for if I had put my trust in the Lord Jesus, I should not be afraid to die, but I should be quite confident. I do not doubt that there are many here who are saying,

"Sir, I cannot follow Christ, because I am afraid to die; I cannot believe that Jesus Christ will save me, because the sight of death makes me tremble." Ah, poor soul, there are many of God's blessed ones, who through fear of death, have been much of their lifetime subject to bondage. I know precious children of God now: I believe that when they die, they will die triumphantly; but I know this, that the thought of death is never pleasing to them. And this is accounted for, because God has stamped on nature that law, the love of life and self-preservation. And again, the man that hath kindred and friends, it is natural enough that he should scarce like to leave behind those that are so dear. I know that when he gets more grace he will rejoice in the thought of death; but I do know that there are many quite safe, who could die triumphantly, who, now, in the prospect of death feel afraid of it. I remember my aged grandfather once preach a sermon which I have not forgotten. He was preaching from the text "The God of all grace," and he somewhat interested the assembly, after describing the different kinds of grace that God gave, by saying at the end of each period "But there is one kind of grace that you do not want." After each sentence there came the like, "But there is one kind of grace you do not want." And, then, he wound up by saying, "You don't want dying grace in living moments, but you shall have dying grace when you want it." Now, you are testing yourself by a condition in which you are not placed. If you are placed in the condition, you shall have grace enough if you put your trust in Christ. In a party of friends we were discussing the question, whether if the days of martyrdom should come we were prepared to be burned. Well, now, I must frankly say, that speaking as I feel to-day, I am not prepared to be burned. But I do believe if there were a stake in Smithfield, and I knew that I were to be burned there at one o'clock, that I should have grace enough to be burned at one o'clock;

but I have not yet got to a quarter past twelve, and the time is not come yet. Do not expect dying grace, until you want it, and when the time comes, you may be sure you will have sufficient grace to bear it. Cast out that stumbling-block then. Rest thyself on Christ, and trust a living Christ to help thee in thy dying hour.

6. Another most grievous perplexity to many a seeking soul is this: "Oh, I would trust Christ, but I feel no joy. I hear the children of God singing sweetly about their privileges. I hear them saying that they have been to the top of Pisgah and have viewed the promised land, have taken a pleasant prospect of the world to come; but oh, my faith yields me no joy. I hope I do believe, but at the same time I have none of those raptures. My worldly troubles press heavily upon me, and sometimes even my spiritual woes are greater than I can bear." Ah, poor soul, let me cast out that stone from thy road. Remember, it is not written "he that is joyful shall be saved," but "he that believeth shall be saved." Thy faith will make thee joyful by-and-bye, but it is as powerful to save thee even when it does not make thee rejoice. Why, look at many of God's people, how sad and sorrowful they have been. I know they ought not to be. This is their sin; but still it is such a sin that it does not destroy the efficacy of faith. Notwithstanding all the sorrows of the saint, faith still keeps alive, and God is still true to his promise. Remember, it is not what you feel that saves you, it is what you believe. It is not feeling but believing. "We walk by faith, not by sight." When I feel my soul as cold as an iceberg, as hard as a rock, and as sinful as Satan, yet even then faith ceases not to justify. Faith prevails as truly in the midst of sad feelings as of happy feelings, for then, standing alone, it proves the majesty of its might. Believe, O son of God, believe in him, and look not for aught in thyself.

7. Then, again, there are many that are distressed because they have blasphemous thoughts. Here, too, I can heartily sympathise with many. I remember a certain narrow and crooked lane in a certain country town, along which I was walking one day while I was seeking the Savior. On a sudden the most fearful oaths that any of you can conceive rushed through my heart. I put my hand to my mouth to prevent the utterance. I had not, that I know of, ever heard those words; and I am certain that I had never used in my life from my youth up so much as one of them, for I had never been profane. But these things sorely beset me: for half an hour together the most fearful imprecations would dash through my brain. Oh, how I groaned and cried before God. That temptation passed away; but ere many days it was renewed again; and when I was in prayer, or when I was reading the Bible, these blasphemous thought would pour in upon me more than at any other time. I consulted with an aged godly man about it. He said to me, "Oh, all this many of the people of God have proved before you. But," said he, "do you hate these thoughts?" "I do," I truly said. "Then," said he, "they are not yours; serve them as the old parishes used to do with vagrants--whip them and send them on to their own parish. So" said he, "do with them. Groan over them, repent of them, and send them on to the devil, the father of them, to whom they belong--for they are not yours." Do you not recollect how John Bunyan hits off the picture? He says, when Christian was going through the valley of the shadow of death, "There stepped up one to him, and whispered blasphemous thoughts into his ear, so that poor Christian thought they were his own thoughts; but they were not his thoughts at all, but the injections of a blasphemous spirit." So when you are about to lay hold on Christ, Satan will ply all his engines and try to destroy you. He cannot bear to lose one of his slaves: he will invent a fresh temptation for each believer so that he

may not put his trust in Christ." Now, come, poor soul, notwithstanding all these blasphemous thoughts in thy soul, dare to put thy trust in Christ. Even should those thoughts have been more blasphemous than any thou hast ever heard, come trust in Christ, come cast thyself on him. I have heard that when an elephant is going over a bridge he will sound the timber with his foot to see if it will bear him over. Come thou, who thinkest thyself an elephantine sinner, here is bridge that is strong enough for thee, even with all these thoughts of thine:--"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven thee." Throw that in Satan's face, and trust thyself in Christ.

8. One other stumbling-block, and I will have done. Some there be that say; Oh, sir, I would trust in Christ to save me if I could see that my faith brought forth fruits. Oh, sir, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Excuse my always bringing in my own feelings as an illustration, but I feel when I am preaching to tried sinners that the testimony of one's own experience is generally more powerful than any other illustration that can be found. It is not, believe me, any display of egotism, but the simple desire to come home to you, that makes me state what I have felt myself. The first Sunday after I came to Christ I went to a Methodist chapel. The sermon was upon this text: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I had just got as far as that in the week. I knew that I had put my trust in Christ, and I knew that, when I sat in that house of prayer, my faith was simply and solely fixed on the atonement of the Redeemer. But I had a weight on my mind, because I could not be as holy as I wanted to be. I could not live without sin. When I rose in the morning I thought I would abstain from every hard word, from every evil thought and look; and I came up to that chapel groaning, because "when I would do good evil was present with me." The minister said that when

Paul wrote the verse I have quoted, he was not a Christian; that this was his experience before he knew the Lord. Ah, what error, for I know that Paul was a Christian, and I know the more Christians look to themselves the more they will have to groan, because they cannot be what they want to be. What, you will not believe in Christ until you are perfect? Then you will never believe in him. You will not trust the precious Jesus till you have no sins to trust him with! Then you will never trust him at all. For rest assured you will never be perfect till you see the face of God in heaven. I knew one man who thought himself a perfect man and that man was hump-backed. This was my rebuke to his pride, "Surely if the Lord gave you a perfect soul he would give you a perfect body to carry it in." Perfection will not be found this side of the grave. Your business is to trust in Christ. You must depend on nothing but the blood of Christ. Trust in Christ and you stand secure. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life." It is our duty to fight against corruption; it is our privilege to conquer it; it is our honor to feel that we are fighting against sin, it shall be our glory one day to tread it beneath our feet. But to-day expect not complete victory. Your very consciousness of sin proves that you are alive. The very fact that you are not what you want to be, proves that there is some high and noble thoughts in you that could not come by nature. You were content with yourself some six weeks ago, were you not? And the fact that you are discontent now, proves that God has put a new life into you, which makes you seek after a higher and better element in which to breathe. When you become what you want to be on earth, then despair. When the law justifies you, then you have fallen from grace; for Paul has said, "When we are justified by the law we are fallen from grace." But while I feel that the law condemns me it is my joy to know that believing in Christ, "There is no condemnation to him

that is in Christ Jesus, who walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And now though I have been trying to clear the way I feel conscious that very likely I have been putting a stone or two in the road myself. May God forgive me--it is a sin of inadvertance. I would lay this road as straight and clear as ever was turnpike road between one city and another. Sinner, there is nothing which can rob thee of thy right to believe in Christ. Thou art freely invited to come to the marriage banquet. The table is spread, and the invitation freely given. There are no porters at the door to keep thee out; there are none to ask a ticket of admission of thee:

"Let not conscience make you linger;
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Come to him just as thou art. But, ah, I know that when we sit in our studies it seems a light think to preach the gospel and make people believe in Christ, but when we come to practice, it is the hardest thing in the world. If I were to tell you to do some great thing you would do it; but simply, when it is, "Believe, wash and be clean!" you will not do it. If I said, "Give me ten thousand pounds," you would give it. You would crawl a thousand miles on your hands and knees, or drink the bitterest draught that was ever concocted; but this trusting in Christ is too hard for your proud spirit. Ah, sinner, art thou too proud to be saved? Come, man, I beseech thee by the love of Christ, by the love of thine own soul, come with me, and let us go together to the foot of the cross. Believe on him who hangs groaning there, oh, put thy

trust in him, who is risen from the dead, and has led Captivity captive. And if thou trustest him, poor sinner, thou shalt not be disappointed; it shall not be trust misplaced. Again I say it, I am content to be lost if thou art lost trusting in Christ; I will make my bed in hell with thee should God reject thee, if thou puttest thy simple trust in Christ. I dare to say that, and to look that boldly in the face; for thou wouldst be the first sinner that was ever cast away trusting in Jesus. "But, oh," saith one, "I cannot think that such a wretch as I am can have a right to believe." Soul, I tell thee it is not whether thou art a wretch, or not a wretch; it is the command that is thy warrant. Thou art commanded to believe. And when a command comes home with power the power comes with the command; and he who is commanded, being made willing, casts himself on Christ, and he believes, and is saved.

I have labored this morning to try and make myself as clear as I can about this doctrine. I know if any man is saved it is the work of God the Holy Ghost from first to last. "If any man is regenerate, it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of blood, but of God." But I do not see how that great truth interferes with this other, "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved." And I would again, even to the falling down on my knees, as though God did beseech you by me, pray you "In Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." And this is the reconciliation, "That ye believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," that ye trust Christ. Do you understand me? That ye cast yourself on him; that ye depend on nothing but what he has done. Saved you must be, lost you cannot be, if you fling yourself wholly upon Christ, and cast the whole burden of your sins, your doubts, your fears, and your anxieties wholly there. Now, this is preaching free grace doctrine. And if any wonder how a Calvinist can preach thus, let me say that this is the preaching

that Calvin preached, and better still it is the preaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. We have divine warrant when we tell you, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Chapter 8

A Home Question

A Sermon

(No. 294)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 15th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand

"But are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"--2 Chron. 28:10.

THIS WAS A HOME STROKE. When the children of Israel had bloodthirsty thoughts towards their brethren of Judah, the prophet very earnestly dissuaded them. "Why deal ye so sternly with your brethren who are in your power, simply because they have sinned. Smite them not too furiously, for are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" How remarkably pertinent is such a question to different nations, to different sects, to different classes among men. We are too apt to look upon the sins of other nations and forget our own. Placed as we imagine ourselves to be in a pre-eminence in the midst of the peoples of the earth--we are continually criticising the acts of other tribes and nations. We look across the flood and we see that grand Republic, with the black stain of slavery upon its fair hand, and we cry out against it with all our might. We look across the channel, and we see a nation that we are continually charging with being volatile and frivolous. We cast our eyes to other peoples of the earth, and we see crimes in them, all which we very readily condemn with iron tongue. It will always be well for the pride of Great Britain if she will question herself thus. Is there not with thee, oh mistress of the seas--is there not with thee a sin against the Lord our God? Are

we immaculate? Is our nation spotless? We have no slaves at home or abroad, but have we none who are oppressed and down-trodden? Are there none concerning whom it may be said, that the hire of the laborer which is kept back crieth out against them? Have we not drunkenness in our midst? Are we not in feet among the very chief of sinners, because as a nation we have received more Scripture light, and more Divine favor than any other people among the race of men? God hath dealt so well with us, that our crimes assume a monstrous shape and vivid color when they are viewed in the light of his countenance. Oh Britain, weep for thy sons and daughters, and bemoan their iniquity before the Lord, lest like Capernaum they sink to hell amid the full flood of privileges disregarded. Instead of lifting up your hand to point at the faults of others, point at your own. Let us be content to sweep our own streets, to cleanse our own cities and make our own streams pure. Let our reformation begin at home, for we cannot hope that our remonstrances against the sin of other nations can be powerful, unless we have cleansed ourselves.

How applicable, too, is this question to the different sects, especially among Christians. How apt we all are to be plucking the mote from the eye of others. How very earnestly does the Dissenter exclaim against the sins of the Church of England, and certainly they are neither few nor small. How anxiously does the man in the Church of England, who happens to have an uncharitable bias, observe the strifes and divisions that exist among the Dissenting bodice; and as for all the different denominations, how continually will they be pointing to unscriptural traits in the order of other churches and how constantly do they forget their own infirmities. I hold that every Christian man is bound to give his honest testimony to every truth he believes. We must not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, because we may be

charged with sectarianism. Every great man had been called a Sectarian in his time, and every true man who stands up for the whole that God teaches, will necessarily incur that censure. But let every Christian remember that our business is to deal first with ourselves. Let each denomination acknowledge its own faults, and confess its own iniquities. I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung, as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism, and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all other sects; but I am equally clear as to our innumerable faults. Indeed, the sins and faults of our denomination may well go up against us to heaven, and withhold the dew of God's grace that we prosper not. I believe it to be the same with every other class of Christians, and I would that whenever we are prone to rebuke our fellows too severely, we would pause and ask ourselves this question: "Are there not with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God?"

The like question may be continually reiterated in the ears of the different classes into which our commonwealth is divided. You see continually plastered on the walls--"Sermons to the Working Classes." The working classes might return the compliment by papering the walls with "Sermons to the Wealthy Classes," for if there be any that need preaching to, it is the rich. If there be any men, or any class of men, among whom the gospel has its stronghold, it is just that order and class of persons who may be fairly ranked among the working classes. I do not believe in the intense need of the working classes for evangelization any more than any other class among men. All class-preaching is. I take it, fundamentally wrong. We preach the gospel to every creature, and the Christian minister knows nothing of rich or poor, of young man or old man. The gospel is to be preached

every day to everybody. No doubt the intent is good, but I think the shape which it takes is calculated to raise up party prejudices, and to arouse class feelings. We stand up, and we say to all the classes, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What if the poor man has his tavern and his house of drunkenness--what are the drinking-parties of the rich? What! is there no covered and concealed drunkenness hidden under the shadows of night? What if the poor have a place where they meet for licentiousness? Is there no such licentiousness among the aristocracy? Do they not cast off those whom they have debauched, and help to feed the stream of harlotry with the refuse of their lusts? Ah, my brethren, it is not for the Christian minister to set one rank of men against another. We are alike guilty from the highest to the lowest. We have sins to confess and acknowledge, and the prophet of God must go through streets of this modern Nineveh, and he must demand that king as well as commoner should repent. We have the same gospel for all. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"

But if the question be pertinent to nations, to sects, to classes, depend upon it, It is equally so to individuals. It is the nature of truth, like the crystal, that subdivide it as you may, every minute atom of it shall assume the same shape. Break up the truth from nations to sects, or from nations to classes, and it still holds true; subdivide it, dash it into atoms of individuality, and the same question is pertinent to each. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"

I propose this morning, God helping me, to preach a very plain,

faithful, and honest sermon; praying that it may come home to some of your hearts. You will find no smoothness about my speech but the very reverse. My sword may have a very mean hilt, but I do trust it shall have a very keen edge, and that it shall cut sharp, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow. I shall first of all, put a home question, secondly, I shall make a common sense enquiry, and ere I have done, I shall give you a little good advice.

I. First, then, I put A HOME QUESTION. Let me single out the persons and put the questions to them.

Doubtless I have here this morning, the moralist, the man who hates the very name of drunkenness. As for profanity, if he saw the seat of the scorner, he would pass by it at the remotest distance possible. He is a man whose hands are clean of all dishonesty. As far as he knows himself, he can say that he is upright in his business, that he is kind to his neighbors, that in everything he endeavors to keep the moral law. My friend has no religion perhaps, but still he has the outward form of morality. Bring anywhere between the wind and his nobility, the harlot, and oh, how disgusted he is! Let him but see one evening the drunkard rolling in the streets, and no language can be too severe. As for the thief, he condemns him, and condemns him rightly too. But one part of his condemnation arises from the fact that he feels himself without any guilt or accusation in this matter. He is innocent and therefore he feels that he may throw the first stone. My dear friend, I am glad to see you here this morning. I wish that all men were as moral as you are. I wish that all hated sin as much as you do; but still I have a question to ask of you, which perhaps you may not like, for you good moral people are very fond of your own righteousness. Let me ask you the question, "Is there not with you, even with you, some sin against the Lord your God?" Can you not remember any overt deed of

wrong? Do you dare to tell me that you have never, never once broken a command of God? Well let it stand so, but have you never said an idle word, and have you never read that for every idle word that man shall speak the Lord shall bring him into judgment? Has your tongue always been as clean of every evil thing as God's law requires it should be? What! have you the matchless effrontery to say that? Do you think so well of yourself that you will declare that nothing has ever come out of your mouth but that which is good? Come then a little deeper, how about your thoughts? Remember, the thought of evil is sin. Have you never thought an evil thought, never desired an evil thing? Oh, man, I will not compliment you thus; take down the ten commandments, read through the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and read it through prayerfully, and I think you will be compelled to say as you read each commandment through, "Lord have mercy upon me, for though I thought my life was good, I now discover that with me even with me, there is sin against God." I do not condemn you for finding fault with the drunkard or the harlot, but I condemn you for this, that unless you are without fault yourself, you ought not to take up the first stone. You, too, live in a glass house, why throw stones at others? I wish you would turn your attention to yourself. Physician heal thyself, builder build thine own wall, husbandman plough thine own field and trim thine own vines. What signifieth it to thee if other men are worse than thyself, will that save thee? Cook to thyself, I pray thee, or else thy morality shall be but the white winding sheet of thy dead soul. For men may be as truly damned in morality as in immorality. Morality is good enough for what it is, but for the salvation of souls it is not sufficient.

There must be a living faith in a dying Savior, there must be the Spirit of God indwelling in the soul or else you can never mount to heaven. Oh remember, one sin will sink your soul lower than the lowest

hell. Repent therefore, O moralist, and no longer rebuke others, but rebuke thyself.

I now turn to another individual, a very common personage, the accuser of the brethren. I fear I have not a few here of that sort. I know I have some, but I fear they may be more than I think. Do you not know the man who whenever he can say a nasty thing of a Christian will do it, who, whatever a Christian man may do will make mischief of it, who is inclined at all times to be turning that which is good into evil--a man described by Spenser in his picture of Envy in the "Faerie Queene." Envy, who always did chew between his dripping lips a toad, but "inwardly he chewed his own maw," eating his own heart, spitting on every one's good thing, imagining that every creature was as foul and as loathsome as himself? I have seen the dirty, mangy wretch, himself abominable as hell, and daring to insinuate that all others were as deceitful, and vile, and filthy as himself. This is when the evil has come to its full grown state. Such persons then become the most loathsome creatures in all society, and the most despicable. Who is there that respects the wretch who has no respect for others; whose only life is to pull other men's characters to pieces, and whose death would be sure to follow the universal reign of truth and goodness. I have seen, however, this disease before it has broken out and assumed its basest shape. I have seen men, and women too--let me lay a stress on that second word, for there is a stress sometimes needed there, though I would not be too severe--men and women who seem to have a propensity rather to observe that which is evil in another than that which is good. Now, I will put this home question. My friend, it is all very well for you to have those eyes so sharp, and to wear those magnifying glasses for other people, but "are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What about your own life? I

will tell you something about it. Whatever you think of other people is true of yourself--that is an invariable rule. We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel, and if you think you find other people's corn very gritty, the dirt was originally in your own. Depend upon it, that your judgment of others will be God's judgment of you, for with what measure ye mete the same shall be measured to you again. Now, what good have you ever got in your life by finding fault with other people? I will tell you all the good you have got. You have often been found fault with by others, you have been hated, you have been distrusted, you have lost many loves you might have received, you have sundered yourself from kind associations, and if you continue in your present course, you will be like the dreary iceberg that floats in the sea, always to be dreaded and avoided, chilling the atmosphere for miles around, and threatening destruction to the unwary mariner who happens to come into its neighborhood. Nay, more, if your calumnies have been directed against a servant of God, you have brought upon your head the most awful doom that can ever fall on man "He that toucheth my people toucheth the apple of mine eye," saith God. You have thrust your finger into the eye of God, and what shall be the doom which you shall receive? Tremble, sinner, there is nothing that brings a man's wrath into his face like finding fault with his children. He will stand many an insult, but once touch his children and his spirit boils with indignation. And so touch the children of God, find fault with them, and verily, verily, I say unto you, it were better for you that a millstone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" I am afraid none will take this second passage home, and the person who applies it to himself will be very angry. My dear friend, excuse me for saying that is a matter which I shall not at all

regret, for if you will but be angry with yourself, you may be as angry as you please with me.

And now for the third class. I have here the man who says, "Well, I have not been touched in either of those things. I hope I am something more than moral. I am religious also. You never see me absent from my place of worship. I am as punctual as a chronometer whenever the doors are open. I add to my morality that which is better still. I attend to ceremonies; there is not one which I have not observed. I have endeavored as far as I can to carry out every precept of the Christian ritual. I feel indignant with men who break the Sabbath; I feel angry with those who have no reverent regard for God's house." My dear friend, I do not condemn you for those feelings, but permit me to put to you a question. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" The preacher stands here this morning to make a personal confession. It not unfrequently happens that in condemning others he condemns himself; and while that is a painful thing to him as a man, it is always a hopeful sign to him as a minister, because surely that which compels contrition and repentance in your pastor, may possibly be profitable to you, to bring you also to repentance. There are, however, some outwardly religious people, who, when this question is put to them, imagine that certainly they have no sins whatever. Ah, my dear hearers, "if ye say that ye have no sin, ye deceive yourselves, and the truth is not in you." But if you answer this question sorrowfully, saying, "Alas, alas, I am not what I would be; I pray God to sanctity me wholly, spirit, soul, and body," then I think there is a sign of life within. But if on the contrary, you reply, "No, I have no sin, I am perfect, I am complete through my ceremonial righteousness;" ah, my dear hearer, you know not what spirit you are of. Though you have attended to the outward form, what is that unless you have

received the spiritual grace? though you have been constant at the place of worship, let me ask you, what is that unless you have brought your heart with you? Have you always heard as you would desire to hear if the sermon should be your last? Have you always prayed as you would desire to pray if you knew that rising from your knees you would have to lie down in your grave? Oh no, my brethren, we are too cold, too lukewarm, too chilled in our affections; we must mourn before God that with us, even with us, there are sins against the Lord our God.

But again, I have to speak to a character of a very common kind. There is a man here who says, "Well, sir, I make no profession of religion--do not think of doing such a thing. I hate hypocrisy of all things in the world. It is true, sir, I commit a great many faults, and am often very loose, but then you know everybody knows me; they can see my character at once. I never cheat anybody. I would not be a cant, to go up to a place of worship and then go on as some people do afterwards; I would not be taking; the sacrament one day and then be grinding the poor on the morrow. No, sir, I am as honest at possible, and I have no doubt that when I stand before Almighty God I shall have as good a time of it as some of these professing Christians." Well, my friend, I like honesty; there is something an Englishman always likes in an honest speech; but do you know I am inclined to think that there is a little hypocrisy about you. I think you are not quite as honest as you seem to be; for if I were to put some home and very pointed questions to you, I should not be surprised if you were to get very angry. Have you not heard of the monk who said what a miserable sinner he was, and some one said, "Ay, that you are, there is no mistake about it." Then the monk grew wrath, and demanded in a passion, "What do you know against me? I will not be insulted by you." And probably if I were to take you at your word, and say to you, "Yes, that is just the fact,

you are so bad a fellow as you can be," you would say, "I will not be insulted even by a minister; go along with you, sir, what do you know about me?" Your honesty is merely worn as a mask. Your conscience is uneasy, and this is a pat on the back for it, a sort of lullaby to send it to sleep. But suppose you are honest, let me ask you what there is to boast of in your honesty. A man bounces into the prisoner's box before the Court, and says, "My Lord Mayor, here I am as honest a man as can be. I am no hypocrite: I do not plead Not guilty,' for I am in the habit of stealing, and committing larceny, felony, highway robbery, and burglary." Now, is he not an honest man? Yes, with this little exception, that by his own confession he is a rogue. So is it with you, sir; you say you are honest, and yet on your own confession that very honesty which you plead is but a confession of your own abominable wickedness. And you imagine that when you stand before God, if you tell him, "Lord, I never professed to love thee, I never pretended to serve thee," God will accept your impudence as honesty--that he will look upon your presumption as sincerity! Why, sir, you cannot mean what you say; you must have deceived yourself most terribly if you do. Your honesty in avowing yourself to be a slave of Satan! Your effrontery in declaring that you are steeped up to the very throat in sin, is this to be an apology for your sin? Oh! man, be wiser. But I put now this question to you. You say that you are no hypocrite, and that you hate hypocrisy. Then I ask you, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" What if you are no hypocrite--yet you are profane, and you curse God to his face; what if you are not a deceiver, yet are you not a drunkard, and a companion of adulterers? Ah! sir, there are sins in your heart, and loathsome ones too; your hardened acknowledgment that you are a sinner is of no value; that drunken braggadocio honesty of which you talk is of no value whatever. Get rid,

I beseech you, of any hope or confidence that you may place in it.
And now if I have omitted one class, if there be one into whose heart the question has not penetrated, let me go round personally. I cannot do so literally; but let this finger range you all, and let this eye look into every face. "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" Answer it not for others, but for thyself, my hearer; give a reply from the depth of thine own consciousness, and sitting in this hall, remember thine own sin, and make the silent confession of sin before God. And O may he fulfill that promise--"He that confesseth his sin and forsaketh it shall find mercy."

II. Now I come to the second point, A COMMON SENSE QUESTION. They say that common sense is worth all the other senses put together; and methinks if men could but use common sense aright, it might be a fine thing for them in matters of religion. You know what Young says--"All men think all men mortal but themselves." We believe that all men will die, but somehow or other, we fancy we shall live. Now the question I shall put reminds me of that sentence. It is this, "Who are you that you think you shall escape the punishment of sin?" When the first question was put, you were compelled to confess that you had some guilt; who are you that God should let you off, and not punish you? who are you that you should stand clear of the sins that you have committed? All men think all men guilty but themselves. They think all men deserve to be punished; but every man has such a good excuse of his own iniquity, that he thinks surely at the last day, he may hope to creep away without the curse. Now I put this common sense question: What is there about you that your sins should not be punished as well as the sins of any other man? Who has given you an exemption? What is there about you that you should walk about this earth and fancy your sins are nothing at all, and that other persons sins are so tremendous?

What fine gentleman are you that you fancy your pedigree to be so distinguished, that because the blood of counts, and dukes, and earls, and princes, and kings may happen to stain your veins, therefore you shall stand clear? Of course the sins of the lower classes are dreadful--oh, so dreadful--but what is there about yours my lord, that yours are so trivial? Surely if the poor man is to be punished, the equal law which stands for all, and which heaven will carry out, will not exempt you. Let me remind you, that so far from exempting, it may perhaps give you a double penalty, because your sin has led others into sin, and the prominence of your position, has been the means of spreading the pestilence of crime amongst others. I say to you, sir, however great you may be, what can there be in that roll of honor that you receive among men, that can in the least degree move the Lord your God? How he sniffs at this princely blood; he knows that you were all made of earth as Adam was, and that you all sprung from that gardener, that dishonest gardener, who of old lost his situation, because he would steal his Master's fruit. A pretty pedigree if you trace it up to its root! Oh, sir, there is nothing in it whatever. I beseech you, remember your sins must be punished as well as those of the vagrant, pauper, criminal.

But make way for yonder gentleman; he imagines he is not to be punished because of his respectability. He has been such an honest tradesmen; has he not been at the corner of the street since eighteen hundred and two? Whoever heard that he failed and run through the court? Is he not respected by everybody? Well, sir, and what do you think your respectability has to do with it? You have sinned sir, and you will be punished as surely as anybody else. Every iniquity shall have its just recompense of reward. It will be in vain for you to plead your paltry respectability when you come up before the throne of God. You may wear

all the stars and all the garters that man was ever befooled with; you may come before God and think that you can wear all the coronets, or all the glittering marks of respectability that ever man dreamt of; but these are nothing. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and if thy works be found evil, those works must be punished, unless thou happily hast found a substitute through whom thy sin can be put away.

What excuses men make on earth. I wish they would always make their excuses believing themselves standing before the judgment-seat. My very honest friend, over there, who said he got drunk, and he did not mind saying that he was not a cant and a hypocrite. Ah! my friend, you will not be likely to say that when the world is in a blaze, when the pillars of earth are reeling, and the stars are falling like untimely figs, then you will find that excuse shrivelled up like a scroll. Will you not be afraid to come before God, you mere moralist, and tell him you have kept his law? You, even now, know you have not, and you shall know it better then, when your conscience has been quickened. And you, formalist, you may condemn others because you attend to every outward ceremony, but the day of judgment will make you feel that ceremonies are less than nothing; and you will be compelled then to cry, "Rocks hide me; mountains on me fall, to hide me from the face of that Lamb whom I despised while I trusted in the outward form and the empty ceremony." Oh, my hearer, whoever you may be, if you have not been born again, if your faith is not fixed on Christ alone, you have no excuse whatever for your sin. You not only are guilty, be you who you may, but you are so guilty that you shall surely be punished for your trespasses. God will not give any exemption to you. Ah, Mr. Accuser, you turn king's evidence on earth, and so hope to escape the bar of man, but there are no king's evidences at the bar of God. You may

accuse the church then; you shall but the more swiftly be condemned. You may rail against your fellow men at the last great day; your words of railing shall but be a witness against you. Oh, my dear hearer, if you are not in Christ, I would that I could so preach that you would begin to tremble. If Christ is not in you, your state is such that nothing but the Lord's mercy keeps you out of hell a single moment. The wrath of God has gone out against you; you are condemned already because you have not believed in Christ. I want if I can, to draw this bow, not at a venture, but in such a way that the arrow will go home directly to the heart. "Repent and be converted, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Ye have sins, repent of them, I beseech you; bewail yourselves before God. May his Spirit give you a mind for repentance, and make you humble on account of him; and then remember there is mercy for the contrite; there is pardon for the penitent. But to the man who hugs his sin, or seeks to cloak it, there is no pardon, no mercy, but the wrath of God abideth on him, and the sword of divine justice shall soon be plunged into his heart.

III. I come now, in conclusion, to give A LITTLE ADVICE; it shall be threefold.

My first advice is, leave other people alone with regard to finding fault. My dear sir, if you have been busying yourself with the faults of others, be so good as to cease from that occupation. I know a loathsome fly that can only live on the foulest food, I will not compare you to it, but if you ever want a resemblance, there is yourself to the life. You remind me, when I hear you talk against others, of those poor creatures dressed in rags with a bag on their backs, who go through the streets picking up every stale bone and every piece of offal they can find; with this exception, that their calling is honorable and they may possibly live by it, but yours is

dishonorable, it is of no service to you or to any one else. There never perhaps was an age when men's characters were less safe than now. The best man that breathes beneath the sun may live to find some putrid wretch standing up to accuse him of crimes of which he never dreamed. I beseech you all, if you hear ought against any man, do not believe it till you see it. Liars now-a-days are rife as wasps in summer. Hold off those black hands, thou devilish traducer! O slanderer, have done with thy filthy work; rake no more in the kennel, lest thou be sent to rake in the blazing kennel of hell, there to find out the faults of others which like serpents shall be set to bite thine own bosom and suck thy soul's blood throughout eternity. Take heed, slanderer, for there are hot coals of juniper and fiery irons awaiting the false tongue that lifteth up itself against God and his people.

After that first piece of advice let me give another. Treat yourselves, my dear friends, as you have been accustomed to treat others. We get another man's character and tie it up to the halberds, and out with our great whip and begin to lay it on with all our force, and after the flogging, we wash the poor creature with a kind of briny pretense at excusing his sins. After that again we throw him back upon the bed of spikes of our own supposition that he is a great deal worse than we have made him out to be. Ah, just serve thyself so. Tie thyself up to the halberds man, and lay on the whip; do not spare him. When you have got yourself tied up, hit hard, sir, it is a great rascal you are whipping. Never mind his flesh creeping, he deserves it all. Never mind, though the white bones start from the raw red bleeding back--lay it on. Now then, a heavy blow! kill him if you can, the sooner he is dead the better; for when he is once killed as to an idea of righteousness in himself, then he will begin to lead a new life and be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Do not be afraid of whipping him, but

when the cat-o'-nine-tails is heavy with clots of gore, rub the brine into his back, make it tingle. Tell him that his sins deserve the wrath of hell. Make him feel that it is an awful thing to fall into the hands of our God, for he is a consuming fire. Then throw him down on the bed of spikes, and make him sleep there if he can. Roll him on the spikes, and tell him that bad as he is, he is worse by nature than by practice. Make him feel that the leprosy lies deep within. Give him no rest. Treat him as cruelly as he could treat another. Twould be only his deserts. But who is this that I am telling you to treat so? Yourself, my hearer, yourself. Be as severe as you can, but let the culprit be yourself. Put on the wig, and sit upon the judgment-seat. Read the king's commission. There is such a commission for you to be a judge. It says--Judge thyself--though it says judge not others. Put on, I say, your robes; sit up there lord chief justice of the Isle of man, and then bring up the culprit. Make him stand at the bar. Accuse him; plead against him; condemn him. Say: "Take him away, jailer." Find out the hardest punishment you can discover in the statute book, and believe that he deserves it all. Be as severe as ever you can on yourself, even to the putting on the black cap, and reading the sentence of death. When you have done this, you will be in a hopeful way for life, for he that condemns himself God absolves. He that stands self-convicted, may look to Christ hanging on the cross, and see himself hanging there, and see his sins for ever put away by the sacrifice of Jesus on the tree. The third piece of counsel, with which I am about to close, is this: My dear hearer, with you there are sins, and God must in justice punish you as well as others. I do beseech you look to the eternal interests of your own souls. I have hard work to plead this last point. May God the Holy Spirit take it in hand, and it will be done to purpose; but it he do not do it, all I can say will fall with lifeless dulness upon

your ear. As well preach to the dead in the grave as to the unawakened sinner, but yet I am commanded to preach to the dead, and therefore I do preach to the dead this morning. My dear hearer, look to thine own soul's salvation. These are happy times. We are living just now in a period when the grace of God is manifesting itself in a singular manner. There is more prayer in London now than there has been in the last ten years; and I believe more outpouring of the Holy Spirit than some of us have ever known. Oh! I beseech you, look well for this auspicious gale. Now the wind is blowing, up with thy sail; when the tide is coming in full, launch thy boat, and oh may God the Spirit bear thee on towards life and happiness! But, I beseech thee, make thy first object in life thy own salvation. What is thy shop compared with thy soul? Nay, what is thy body, thine eyes, thy senses, thy reason, compared with shine immortal soul? Let this word ring in thine ears, Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! And, oh! I beseech thee, look well to thyself, lest eternity should become to thee a sea without a shore, where fiery billows shall for ever toss thy wretched soul. Eternity! Eternity! And must I climb thy topless steeps and never find a summit? Must I plough thy pathless waters and never find a haven? Tis even so. Then grant me, God, that I may climb in eternity the mount of bliss, and not the hill of woe; and may I sail across the sea of happiness and joy, and not across the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone! Look to yourself. sir. This is a day of good tidings for many, may it be a day of good tidings for you! I beseech you, give up thinking about men at large, about the world, and nations; what have you to do with politics? Let your polities be the politics of your own soul. Attend those other things by-and-bye, but now give yourself the favor of your own thoughts. Begin at home. I do fear there are more lost through this than almost through any other cause, next to procrastination--thinking

about others and forgetting about self. I wish I could put you to-day, in some respects, like those who are in the chapel of the penitentiary, where every man sees the minister during service, but no man sees another. My dear hearer, do recollect that what I have said I mean for you, not for other people. Take it home; and to-day, I beseech you, go to your chamber. and may God compel you by his grace to make a confession of your own sins. Seek a Savior for yourself; and oh may you find him for yourself and then begin to seek him for others. If this were a day of famine, would you be content to hear me say, "There is bread in abundance stored away in the Tower--there is a great quantity of food there?" No, you would say, "Let me go and get some of this bread for myself." You would go home, and the cries of your wife and children would compel you to arouse. You would say, "I hear there is bread, I must get it, for I cannot bear to see my wife and children starving." Oh! sinner, hear the cry of thy poor starving soul, hear, I beseech thee, the cry of thy poor body. Thy body does not wish to be cast into fire, and thy soul shrinketh from the thought of everlasting torment. Hear, then, thine own flesh and blood when it cries to thee. Let thine own nature speak; the voice of nature that dreads pain and torment, and wrath to come, and when it speaks, listen to it, and come; come I pray you, to penitence and to faith.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
To Christ, and heal your wounds.
This is the glorious gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

May God the Holy Spirit draw you, or drive you, whichever he pleases, so that you may be brought to life, and peace, and happiness, and salvation, through the precious blood.

Chapter 9

The Treasure of Grace

A Sermon

(No. 295)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 22nd, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."--Ephesians 1:7.

AS IS ISAIAH among the prophets, so is Paul among the apostles; each stands forth with singular prominence, raised up by God for a conspicuous purpose, and shining as a star of extraordinary brilliance. Isaiah spake more of Christ, and described more minutely his passion and his death than all the other prophets put together. Paul proclaimed the grace of God--free, full, sovereign, eternal race--beyond all the glorious company of the apostles. Sometimes he soared to such amazing heights, or dived into such unsearchable depths, that even Peter could not follow him. He was ready to confess that "our beloved brother Paul, according to his wisdom given unto him," had written "some things hard to be understood." Jude could write of the judgments of God, and reprove with terrible words, "ungodly men, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness." But he could not tell out the purpose of grace as it was planned in the eternal mind, or the experience or grace as it is felt and realized in the human heart, like Paul. There is James again: he, as a faithful minister, could deal very closely with the practical evidences of Christian character. And yet he seems to keep very much on the surface; he does not bore down deep into the substratum on which must rest the visible soil of all spiritual graces. Even John, most

favoured of all those apostles who were companions of our Lord on earth--sweetly as the beloved disciple writes of fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ--even John doth not speak of grace so richly as Paul, "in whom God first showed forth all long-suffering as a pattern to hem which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Not, indeed, that we are at any liberty to prefer one apostle above another. We may not divide the Church, saying, I am of Paul, I of Peter, I of Apollos; but we may acknowledge the instrument which God was pleased to use; we may admire the way in which the Holy Ghost fitted him for his work; we may, with the churches of Judea, "glorify God in Paul." Among the early fathers Augustine was singled out as the "Doctor of Grace;" so much did he delight in those doctrines that exhibit the freeness of divine favour. And surely we might affirm the like of Paul. Among his compeers he outstripped them all in declaring the grace that bringeth salavation. The sense of grace pervaded all his thoughts as the life blood circulates through all the veins of one's body. Does he speak of conversion, "he was called by grace." Nay, he sees grace going before his conversion, and "separating him from his mother's womb." He attributes all his ministry to grace. "To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." See him at any time, and under any circumstances, whether bowed down with infirmity, or lifted to the third heavens with revelation, he has but one account to give of himself, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

There are no ministers who contend so fully and so unflinchingly for free, sovereign, unconditional grace, as those who before their conversion have revelled in gross and outrageous sin. Your gentleman preachers who have been piously brought up, and sent from their cradle

to school, from school to college, and from college to the pulpit, without encountering much temptation, or being rescued from the haunts of profanity--they know comparatively little, and speak with little emphasis of free grace. It is a Bunyan who breathed curses, a Newton who was a ver monster in sin; it is the like of these, who cannot forget for one hour of their lives afterwards, the grace that snatched them from the pit, and plucked them as brands from the burning. Strange indeed that God should have it so. The providence is inscrutable that permits some of the Lord's chosen people to wander and rove as far as sheep can stray. Such men, however, make the most valiant champions for that grace which only can rescue any sinner from eternal woe.

This morning we propose to expound to you "the riches of God's grace; this is the Treasure; then, secondly, we shall speak of the "Forgiveness of Sins," which is to be judged of by that Measure; the forgiveness is according to the riches of his grace; and we shall afterwards wind up by considering some of the privileges connected therewith.

I. First, consider the RICHES OF HIS GRACE. In attempting to search out that which is unsearchable, we must, I suppose, use some of those comparisons by which we are wont to estimate the wealth of the monarchs, and mighty ones of this world. It happened once that the Spanish ambassador, in the haleyon days of Spain, went on a visit to the French ambassador, and was invited by him to see the treasures of his master. With feelings of pride he showed the repositories, profusely stored with earth's most precious and most costly wealth. "Could you show gems so rich," said he, "or aught the life of this for magnificence of possessions in all your sovereign's kingdom?" "Call your master rich?" replied the ambassador of Spain, "why; my master's treasures have no bottom"--alluding, of course, to the mines of Peru

and Petrosa. So truly in the riches of grace there are mines too deep for man's finite understanding ever to fathom. However profound your investigation, there is still a deep couching beneath that baffles all research. Who can ever discover the attributes of God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection? We are at a loss to estimate the ver quality and properties of grace as it dwells in the mind of Deity. Love in the human breast is a passion. With God it is not so. Love is an attribute of the divine essence. God is love. In men, grace and bounty may grow into a habit, but grace with God is an intrinsic attribute of his nature. He cannot but be gracious. As by necessity of his Godhead he is omnipotent, and omniprescent, so by absolute necessity of his divinity is he gracious.

Come then, my brethren, into this glittering mine of the attributes of the grace of God. Every one of God's attributes is infinite, and therefore this attribute of grace is without bounds. You cannot conceive the infinity of God, why, therefore, should I attempt to describe it. Recollect however, that as the attributes of God are of the like extent, the gauge of one attribute must be the gauge of another. Or, further, if one attribute is without limit, so is another attribute. Now, you cannot conceive any boundary to the omnipotence of God. What cannot he do? He can crate, he can destroy; he can speak a myriad universe into existence; or he can quench the light of myriads of stars as readily as we tread out a spark. He hath but to will it, and creatures without number sing his praise; yet another volition, and those creatures subside into their naked nothingness, as a moment's foam subsides into the wave that bears it, and is lost for ever. The astronomer turns his tube to the remotest space, he cannot find a boundary to God's creating power; but could he seem to find a limit, we would then inform him that all the worlds on worlds that cluster in

space, hick as the drops of morning dew upon the meadows, are but the shreds of God's power. He can make more than all these, can dash those into nothingness, and can begin again. Now as boundless as is his power, so infinite is his grace. As he hath power to do anything, so hath he grace enough to give anything--to give everything to the very chief of sinners.

Take another attribute if you please--God's omniscience, there is no boundary to that. We know that his eye is upon every individual of our race--he sees him as minutely as if he were the only creature that existed. It is boasted of the eagle that though he can outstare the sun, yet when at his greatest height, he can detect the movement of the smallest fish in the depths of the sea. But what is this compared with the omniscience of God? His eye tracks the sun in his marvellous course, his eye marks the winged comet as it flies through space. His eye discerns the utmost bound of creation inhabited or uninhabited. There is nothing hid from the light thereof, with him there is no darkness at all. If I mount to heaven he is there; if I dive to hell he is there; if I fly mounted on the morning ray beyond the western sea,

"His swifter hand shall first arrive,
And there arrest the fugitive."

There is no limit to his understanding, nor is there to his grace. As his knowledge comprehendeth all things, so doth his grace comprehend all the sins, all the trials all the infirmities of the people upon whom his heart is set. Now, my dear brethren, the next time we fear that God's grace will be exhausted, let us look into this mine, and then let us reflect that all that has ever been taken out of it has never diminished it a single particle. All the clouds that have been taken from the sea have never diminished its depth, and all the love, and all the mercy that God has given to all but infinite numbers of the

race of man, has not disminished by a single rain the mountains of his grace. But to proceed further; we sometimes judge of the wealth of men, not only by their real estate in mines and the like, but by what they have on hand stored up in the treasury. I must take you now, my brethren, to the glittering treasury of divine grace. Ye know its names, it is called the Covenant, have you not head the marvellous story of what was done in the olden time before the world was made. God foreknew that man would fall, but he determined of his own infinite purpose and will that he would raise out of this fall a multitude which no man can number. The Eternal Father held a solemn council with the Son and Holy Spirit. Thus spoke the Father:--"I will that those whom I have chosen be saved!" Thus said the Son:--"My Father, I am ready to bleed and die that thy justice may not suffer and that thy purpose may be executed." "I will," said the Holy Spirit, "that those whom the Son redeems with blood shall be called by grace, shall be quickened, shall be preserved, shall be sanctified and perfected, and brought safely home." Then was the Covenant written, signed, and sealed, and ratified between the Sacred Three. The Father gave his Son, the Son gave himself, and the Spirit promises all his influence, all his presence, to all the chosen. Then did the Father give to the Son the persons of his elect, then did the Son give himself to the elect, and take them into union with him; and then did the Spirit in covenant vow that these chosen ones should surely be brought safe home at last. Whenever I think of the old covenant of grace, I am perfectly amazed and staggered with the grace of it. I could not be an Arminian on any inducement; the ver poetry of our holy religion lies in these ancient things of the everlasting hills, that glorious covenant signed and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well from old eternity.

Pause here, my hearer, awhile, and think before this world was made,

ere God had settled the deep foundations of the mountains, or poured the seas from the laver of the bottom of his hand, he had chosen his people, and set his heart on hem. To them he had given himself, his Son, his heaven, his all. For them did Christ determine to resign his bliss, his home, his life; for them did the Spirit promise all his attributes, that they might be blessed. O grace divine, how glorious thou art, without beginning, without end. How shall I praise thee? Take up the strain ye angels; sing these noble themes, the love of the Father, the love of the Son, the love of the Spirit.

This, my brethren, if ye think it over, may well make you estimate aright the riches of God's grace. If you read the roll of the covenant from beginning to end, containing as it does, election, redemption, calling, justification, pardon, adoption, heaven, immortality--if you read all his, you will say, "This is riches of grace--God, great and infinite! Who is a God like unto thee for the riches of thy love!"

The riches of great kings again, may often be estimated by the munificence of the monuments which they reared to record their feats. We have been amazed in these modern times at the marvellous riches of the kings of Nineveh and Babylon. Modern monarchs with all their appliances, would fail to erect such monstrous piles of palaces as those in which old Nebuchadnezzar walked in times of yore. We turn to the pyramids, we see there what the wealth of nations can accomplish; we look across the sea to Mexico and Peru, and we see the relics of a semi-barbarous people but we are staggered and amazed to think what wealth and what mines of riches they must have possessed ere such works could have been accomplished. Solomon's riches are perhaps best judged of by us when we think of those great cities which he built in the wilderness, Tadmore and Palmyra. When we go and visit those ruins and see the massive columns and magnificent sculpture, we say, Solomon

indeed was rich. We feel as we walk amid the ruins somewhat like the queen of Sheba, even in Scripture the half has not been told us of the riches of Solomon. My brethren, God has led us to inspect mightier trophies than Solomon, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Montezuma, or all the Pharaohs. Turn your eyes yonder, see that blood-bought host arrayed in white, surrounding the throne--hark, how they sing, with voice triumphant, with melodies seraphic, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." And who are these? Who are these trophies of his grace? Some of them have come from the stews of harlotry; many of them have come from the taverns of drunkenness. Nay, more, the hands of some of those so white and fair, were once red with the blood of saints. I sere yonder the men that nailed the Saviour to the tree; men who cursed God, and invoked on themselves death and damnation. I see there Manasseh, who shed innocent blood so much, and the thief who in the last moment looked to Christ, and said, "Lord, remember me." But I need not turn your gaze so far aloft; look, my brethren, around, you do not know your next neighbour by whom you are sitting his morning, it may be. But there are stories of grace that might be told by some here this morning, that would make the ver angels sing more loudly than they have done before. Well, I know these cheeks have well nigh been scarlet with tears when I have heard the stories of free grace wrought in this congregation. Then are those known to me, but of course not so to you, who were among the vilest of men, the scum of society. We have here those to whom cursing was as their breath, and drunkenness had grown to be a habit; and yet here they are servants of God, and of his church; and it is their delight to testify to others what a Saviour they have found. Ah, but my hearer, perhaps thou art one of those trophies, and if so, the best proof of the riches of his grace is that which thou

findest in thy own soul. I think God to be gracious when I see others saved, I know he is because he has saved me; that wayward, wilful boy, who scoffed a mother's love, and would not be melted by all her prayers, who only wished to know a sin in order to perpetrate it? Is he standing here to preach the gospel of the grace of God to you to-day? Yes. Then there is no sinner out of hell that has sinned too much for grace to save. That love which can reach to me, can reach to you. Now I know the riches of his grace, because I hope I prove it, and feel it in my own inmost heart, my dear hearer, and may you know it too, and then you will join with our poet, who says--

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heavens resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

Go a little further now. We have thus looked at the wine and treasures, and at the monuments. But more. One thing which amazed the queen of Sheba, with regard to the riches of Solomon, was the sumptuousness ofhis table. Suth multitudes sat down to it to eat and drink, and though they were many, yet they all had enough and to spare. She lost all heart when she saw the provisions of a single day brought in. I forget just now, although I meant to refer to the passage how many fat beast, how many bullocks of the pasture, how many bucks and fallow deer and game of all sorts, and how many measures of flour and how many gallons of oil were brought to Solomon's table every day, but it was something marvellous; and the multitudes that had to feast were marvellous also, yet had they all enough. And now think my brethren of the hospitalities of the God of grace each day. Ten thousand of his people are this day sitting down to feast; hungry and thirsty they bring large appetites with them to he banquet, but not one of them returns unsatisfied; there is enough for each, enough for all, enough

for evermore. Though the host that feed there is countless as the stars of heaven, yet I find that not one lacks his portion. He openeth his hand and supplies the want of every living saint upon the face of the earth. Think how much grace one saint requires, so much that nothing but the Infinite could supply him for one day. We burn so much fuel each day to maintain the fire of love in our hearts, that we might drain the mines of England of all their wealth of coal. Surely were it not that we have infinite treasures of race, the daily consumption of a single saint might out-demand everything that is to be found upon the face of the earth. And yet it is not one but many saints, and many hundreds, not for one day, but for many years; not for many years only, but generation after generation, century after century, race after race of men, living on the fulness of God in Christ. Yet are none of hem starved; they all drink to he full; they eat and are satisfied. What riches of grace then may we see in the sumptuousness of his hospitality.

Sometimes, my brethren, I have thought if I might but get the broken meat at God's back door of grace I should be satisfied; like the woman who said, "The dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table;" or like the prodigal who said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." But you will remember that no child of God is ever made to live on husks; God does not give the parings of his grace to he meanest of them, but they are all fed like Mephibosheth; they eat from the kings own table the daintiest dishes. And if one may speak for the rest, I think in matters of grace we all have Benjamin's mess--we all have ten times as we could have expected, and though not more than our necessities, yet are we often amazed at the marvellous plenty of grace which God gives us in the covenant and the promise.

Now we turn to another point to illustrate the greatness of the riches

of God's grace. A man's riches may often be judged of by the equipage of his children, the manner in which he dresses his servants and those of his household. It is not to be expected that the child of the poor man, though he is comfortably clothed, should be arrayed in like garments to those which are worn by the sons of princes. Let us see, then, what are the robes in which God's people are apparelled, and how they are attended. Here again I speak upon a subject where a large imagination is needed, and my own utterly fails me. God's children are wrapped about with a robe, a seamless robe, which earth and heaven could not buy the like of if it were once lost. For texture it excels the fine linen of the merchants; for whiteness it is purer than the driven snow; no looms on earth could make it, but Jesus spent his life to work my robe of righteousness. There was a drop of blood in every throw of the shuttle, and every thread was made of his own heart's agonies. Tis a robe that is divine, complete; a better one than Adam wore in the perfection of Eden. He had but a human righteousness though a perfect one, but we have a divinely perfect righteousness. Strangely, my soul, art thou arrayed, for thy Saviour's garment is on thee; the royal robe of David is wrapped about his Jonathan. Look at God's people as they are clothed too in the garments of sanctification. Was there ever such a robe as that? It is literally stiff with jewels. He arrays the meanest of his people every day as though it were a wedding day; he arrays them as a bride adorneth herself with jewels; he has given Ehtiopia and Sheba for them, and he will have them dressed in gold of Ophir. What riches of grace then must there be in God who thus clothes his children!

But to conclude this point upon which I have not as yet begun. If you would know the full riches of divine grace, read the Father's heart when he sent his Son upon earth to die; read the lines upon the

Father's countenance when he pours his wrath upon his only begotten and his well-beloved Son. Read too the mysterious handwriting on the Saviour's flesh and soul, when on the cross quivering in agony the waves of swelling grief do o'er his bosom roll. If ye would know love ye must repair to Christ, and ye shall see a man so full of pain, that his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Twas love that made him sweat as it were great drops of blood. If ye would know love, you must see the Omnipotent mocked by his creatures, you must hear the Immaculate slandered by sinners, you must hear the Eternal One groaning out his life, and crying in the agonies of death, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In fine, to sum up all in one, the riches of the grace of God are infinite, beyond all limit; they are inexhaustible, they can never be drained; they are all-sufficient, they are enough for every soul that ere shall come to take of them; there shall be enough for ever while earth endureth, until the last vessel of mercy shall be brought home safely.

So much, then, concerning the riches of His grace.

II. For a minute or two, let me now dwell upon THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS. The treasure of God's grace is the measure of our forgiveness; this forgiveness of sins is according to the riches of his grace. We may infer, then, that the pardon which God gives to the penitent is no niggard pardon. Have not you asked a man's pardon sometimes, and he has said, "Yes, I forgive you," and you have thought, "Well, I would not even have asked for pardon if I thought you would have given it in such a surly style as that; I might as well have continued as I was, as to be so ungraciously forgiven." But when God forgives a man, though he be the chief of sinners, he puts out his hand and freely forgives; in fact, there is as much joy in the heart of God when he forgives, as there is in the heart of the sinner when he is forgiven; God is as

blessed in giving as we are in receiving. It is his very nature to forgive; he must be gracious, he must be loving, and when he lets his heart of love out to free us from our sins it is with no stinted stream; he doth it willingly, he upbraideth it not. Again: if pardon be in proportion to the riches of his grace, we may rest assured it is not a limited pardon, it is not the forgiving of some sins and the leaving of others upon the back. No, this were not Godlike, it were not consistent with the riches of his grace. When God forgives he draws the mark through every sin which the believer ever has committed, or ever will commit. That last point may stagger you, but I do believe with John Kent, that in the blood of Christ

"There's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast;
And, oh! My soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come there's pardon too."

However many, however heinous, however innumerable your sins may have been, the moment you believe they are ever one of them blotted out. In the Book of God there is not a single sin against any man in this place whose trust is in Christ, not a single one, not even the shadow of one, not a spot, or the remnant of a sin remaining, all is gone. When Noah's flood covered the deepest mountains, you may rest assured it covered the mole-hills; and when God's love covers the little sins it covers the big ones, and they are all gone at once! When a bill is receipted fully there is not an item which can be charged again, and when God pardons the sins of the believer there is not one single sin left; not even half-an-one can ever be brought to his remembrance again. Nay, more than this; when God forgives, he not only forgives all but once for all. Some tell us that God forgives men and yet they are lost. A fine god yours! They believe that the penitent sinner finds mercy, but

that if he slips or stumbles in a little while he will be taken out of the covenant of grace and will perish. Such a covenant I could not and would not believe in; I tread it beneath my feet as utterly despicable. The God whom love when he forgives never punishes afterwards. By one sacrifice there is a full remission of all sin that ever was against a believer, or that ever will be against him. Though you should live till your hair is bleached thrice over, till Methuselah's thousand years should pass over your furrowed brow, not a single sin shall ever stand against you, nor shall you ever be punished for a single sin; for every sin is forgiven, fully forgiven, so that not even part of the punishment shall be executed against you. "Well, but," saith one, "how is it that God does punish his children?" I answer, he does not. He chastises them as a father, but that is a different thing from the punishment of a judge. If the child of a judge were brought up to the bar, and that child were freely forgiven all that he had done amiss, if justice exonerated and acquitted him, it might nevertheless happen that there was evil in the heart of that child which the father, out of love to the child, might have to whip out of him. But there is a great deal of difference between a rod in the hand of the executioner, and a rod in a father's hand. Let God smite me, if I sin against him, yet it is not because of the guilt of sin, there is no punishment in it whatever, the penal clause is done away with. It is only that he may cure me of my fault, that he may fetch the folly out of my heart. Do you chasten your children vindictively because you are angry with them? No; but because you love them; if you are what parents should be, the chastisement is a proof of your affection, and your heart smarts more than their body pains, when you have to chasten them for what they have done amiss. God is not angry against his children, nor is there a sin in hem which he will punish. He will whip it out of them, but punish

them for it he will not. O glorious grace! It is a gospel worth preaching.

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives
Redemption in full through Christ's blood."

All is gone; every atome gone; gone for ever and ever; and well he knows it.

"Now freed from sin I walk at large,
My Saviour's blood my full discharge;
At his dear feet my soul I lay,
A sinner saved, and homage pay."

Having thus spoken of the pardon of sin as being fully commensurate with the grace of God, I will put this question to my hearer: My friend, are you a forgiven man? Are your sins all gone? "No," saith one, "I cannot say they are, but I am doing my best to reform." Ah! you may do your best to reform, I hope you will, but that will never wash away a single blood-red stain of guilt. "But," saith one, "may I, just I am, believe that my sins are forgiven?" No, but I tell thee what thou mayst do. If God help thee, thou mayst now cast thyself simply upon the blood and righteousness of Christ; and the moment thou dost that, thy sins are all gone, and gone so that they never can return again. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Nay, he is saved in the moment of his faith. He is no more in the sight of God received as a sinner; Christ has been punished for him. The righteousness of Christ is wrapped about him, and he stands accepted in the beloved. "Well, but," saith one, "I can believe that a man, after he has been a long time a Christian, may know his sins to be forgiven, but I cannot imagine that I can know it at once." The knowledge of our

pardon does not always come the moment we believe, but the fact of our pardon is before our knowledge of it, and we may be pardoned before we know it. But if thou believest on the Lord Jesus Christ with all hine heart, I will tell thee this: If thy faith be free of all self-trust thou shalt know to-day that thy sins are forgiven, for the witness of the Spirit shall bear witness with thy heart, and thou shalt hear that secret, still small voice, saying, "Be of good cheer; thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." "Oh," saith one, "I would give all I have for that." And you might give all you have, but you would not have it at that price. You might give the firstborn for your transgression, the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul, you might offer rivers of oil, and ten thousand of the fat of fed beasts; you would not have it for money, but you may have it for nothing; it is freely brought to you; you are bidden to take it. Only acknowledge your sin, and put your trust in Christ, and there is not one man among you who shall hear aught about his sin in the day of judgment. It shall be cast into the depth of the sea--it shall be carried away for ever.

I will give you a picture, and then leave this subject. See, there stands the high-priest of the Jews. A goat is brought to him: it is called "the scape-goat." He puts his hands upon the head of this goat, and begins to make confession of sin. Will you come and do the like? Jesus Christ is the scape-goat; come and lay your hand on his thorn-crown'd head by faith, and make confession of your sin, as the high-priest did of old. Have you done it? Is your sin confessed? Now believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to take your sin away. Rest wholly and entirely on him. Now what happens? The high-priest takes the scape-goat, gives it into the hand of a trusty man, who leads it over hill and down dale, till he is many miles away, and then, suddenly loosing its bonds, he frightens it, and the goat flees with

all its might. The man watches it till it is gone, and he can see it no more. He comes back, and he says, "I took the scape-goat away, and it vanished out of my sight; it is gone into the wilderness." Ah, my hearer, and if thou hast put thy sins on Christ by a full confession, remember he has taken hem all away, as far as the east is from the west, they are gone, and gone eternally. Thy drunkenness, thy swearing is gone, thy lying, thy theft is gone, thy Sabbath-breaking, thy evil thoughts are gone--all gone, and thou shalt never see them again--

"Plunged, as in a shoreless sea,
Lost, as in immensity."

III. And now I conclude by noticing THE BLESSED PRIVILEGES WHICH ALWAYS FOLLOW THE FORGIVENESS WHICH IS GIVEN TO US ACCORDING TO THE GRACE OF GOD. I think here are a great many people who do not believe there is any reality in religion at all. They think it is a very respectable thing to go to church and to go to chapel, but as to ever enjoying a consciousness that their sins are all forgiven, they never think about that. And I must confess that, in the religion of these modern times, there does not seem to be much reality. I do not hear at this day that clear ringing distinct proclamation of the gospel that I want to hear. It is a grand thing to carry the gospel to all manner of men, to take it to the theatre, and the like, but we want to have the gospel undiluted--the milk must have a little less water with it. There must be a more distinct, palpable truth taught to the people, a something that they can really lay hold of, a something that they can understand, even if they will not believe it. I trust no man will misunderstand me this morning in what I have said. There is such a thing as having all our sins forgiven now. There is such a thing as knowing it and enjoying it. Now I will show you what will be the happiness resulting to you, should you obtain this blessing.

In the first place, you will have peace of conscience, that heart of yours that throbs so fast when you are alone will be quite still and quiet. You will be least alone when you are alone. That fear of yours which makes you quicken your step in the dark because you are afraid of something, and you do not know what, will all be gone. I have heard of a man who was so constantly in debt, and continually being arrested by the bailiffs, that once upon a time, when going by some area railings, having caught his sleeve upon one of the rails, he turned round and said, "I don't owe you anything, Sir." He thought it was a bailiff. And so it is with unforgiven sinners, wherever they are, they think they are going to be arrested. They can enjoy nothing. Even their mirth, what is it, but the colour of joy, the crackling of thorns under the pot; there is no solid steady fire. But when once a man is forgiven, he can walk anywhere, He says, "to me it is nothing whether I live or die, whether ocean depths engulf me, or whether I am buried beneath the avalanche, with sin forgiven, I am secure. Death has no sting to him. His conscience is at rest. Then he goes a step further. Knowing his sins to be forgiven he has joy unspeakable. No man has such sparkling eyes as the true Christian; a man then knows his interest in Christ, and can read his title clear. He is a happy man, and must be happy. His troubles, what are they? Less than nothing and vanity; for all his sins are forgiven. When the poor slave first lands in Canada, it may be he is without a single farthing in his purse, and scarcely anything but rags on his back; but he puts his foot on British soil, and is free; see him leap and dance, and clap his hands, saying, "Great God I thank thee, I am a free man." So it is with the Christian, he can say in his cottage when he sits down to his crust of bread, thank God I have no sin mixed in my cup--it is all forgiven. The bread may be dry, but it is not half so dry as it would be if I had to eat it with the bitter

herbs of a guilty conscience, and with a terrible apprehension of the wrath of God. He has a joy that will stand all weathers, a joy that will keep in all climates, a joy that shines in the dark, and glitters in the night as well as in the day.

Then, to go further, such a man has access to God. Another man with unforgiven sin about him stands afar off; and if he thinks of God at all it is as a consuming fire. But the forgiven Christian looking up to God when he sees the mountains and the hills, and rolling streams and the roaring flood, he says, "My Father made them all;" and he clasps hands with the Almighty across the infinite expanse that sunders man from his Maker. His heart flies up to God. He dwells near to him, and he feels that he can talk to God as a man talketh with his friend.

Then another effect of this is that the believer fears no hell. There are solemn things in the Word of God, but they do not affright the believer. There may be a pit that is bottomless, but into that his foot shall never slide; it is true there is a fire that never shall be quenched, but it cannot burn him. That fire is for the sinner, but he has no sin imputed to him; it is all forgiven. The banded host of all the devils in hell cannot take him there, for he has not a single sin that can be laid to his charge. Daily sinning though he is, he feels those sins are all atoned for; he knows that Christ has been punished in his stead, and therefore Justice cannot touch him again.

Once more, the forgiven Christian is expecting heaven. He is waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, for if death should intervene before that glorious advent, he knows that to him sudden death is sudden glory; and in the possession of a quiet conscience and of peace with God, he can go up to his chamber when the last solemn hour shall come; he can gather up his feet in his bed; he can bid farewell to his brethren and companions, to his wife and to his children, and can shut

his eye in peace without a fear that he shall open them in heaven. Perhaps never does the joy of forgiven sin come out more brightly than it does on a dying bed. It has often been my privilege to test the power of religion when I have been sitting by the bedside of the dying. There is a young girl in heaven now, once a member of this our church. I went with one of my beloved deacons to see her when she was very near her departure. She was in the last stage of consumption. Fair and sweetly beautiful she looked, and I think I never heard such syllables as those which fell from that girl's lips. She had had disappointments, and trials, and troubles, but all these she had not a word to say about, except that she blessed God for hem; they had brought her nearer to the Saviour. And when we asked her whether she was not afraid of dying, "No," she said, "the only thing I fear is his, I am afraid of living, lest my patience should wear out. I have not said an impatient word yet, sir, hope I shall not. It is sad to e so ver weak, but I think if I had my choice I would rather be here than be in health, for it is very precious to me; I know that my Redeemer liveth, and I am waiting for the moment when he shall send his chariot of fire to take me up to him." I put the question, "Have you not any doubts?" "No, none, sir, why should I? I clasp my arms around the neck of Christ." "And have not you any fear about your sins?" "No, sir, they are all forgiven, I trust the Saviour's precious blood." "And do you think that you will be as brave as this when you come actually to die?" "Not if he leaves me, sir, but he will never leave me, for he has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'" There is faith, dear brothers and sisters, may we all have it and receive forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.

Chapter 10

A Revival Sermon

A Sermon

(No. 296)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, January 26th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."--Amos 9:13.

GOD'S PROMISES are not exhausted when they are fulfilled, for when once performed they stand just as good as they did before, and we may await a second accomplishment of them. Man's promises even at the best, are like a cistern which holds but a temporary supply; but God's promises are as a fountain, never emptied, ever overflowing, so that you may draw from hem the whole of that which the apparently contain, and they shall be still as full as ever. Hence it is that you will frequently find a promise containing both a literal and spiritual meaning. In the literal meaning it has already been fulfilled to the letter; in the spiritual meaning it shall also be accomplished, and not a jot or tittle of it shall fail. This is rue of the particular promise which is before us. Originally, as you are aware, the land of Canaan was very fertile; it was a land that flowed with milk and honey. Even where no tillage had been exercised upon it the land was so fruitful, that the bees who sucked the sweetness from the wild flowers produced such masses of honey that the very woods were sometimes flooded with it. It was "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and

pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey." When, however, the children of Israel thrust in the ploughshare and began to use the divers arts of agriculture, the land became exceedingly fat and fertile, yielding so much corn, that they could export through the Phoenicians both corn, and wine, and oil, even to the pillars of Hercules, so that Palestine became, like Egypt, the granary of the nations. It is somewhat surprising to find that now the land is barren, that its valleys are parched, and that the miserable inhabitants gather miserable harvests from the arid soil. Yet the promise still stands true, that one day in the ver letter Palestine shall be as rich and fruitful as ever it was. There be those who understand the matter, who assert that if once the rigour of the Turkish rule could be removed, if men were safe from robbers, if the man who sowed could reap, and keep the corn which his own industry had sown and gathered, the land might yet again laugh in the midst of the nations, and become the joyous mother of children. There is no reason in the soil for its barrenness. It is simply the neglect that has been brought on, from the fact, that when a man has been industrious, his savings are taken from him by the hand of rapine, and the very harvest for which he toiled is often reaped by another, and his own blood split upon the soil.

But, my dear friends, while this promise will doubtless be carried out, and every word of it shall be verified, so that the hill-tops of that country shall again bear the vine, and the land shall flow with wine, yet, I take it, this is more fully a spiritual than a temporal promise; and I think that the beginning of its fulfilment is now to be discerned, and we shall see the Lord's good hand upon us, so that is ploughman shall overtake the reaper, the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all he hills shall melt.

First, I shall this morning endeavour to explain my text as a promise

of revival; secondly, I shall take it as a lesson of doctrine; then as a stimulus for Christian exertion; and I shall conclude with a word of warning to those whose hearts are not given to Christ.

I. First, I take the text as being A GREAT PROMISE OF SPIRITUAL REVIVAL. And here, in looking attentively at the text, we shall observe several ver pleasant things.

1. In the first place, we notice a promise of surprising ingathering. According to he metaphor here used, the harvest is to be so great that, before the reapers can have fully gathered it in, the ploughman shall begin to plough for the next crop--while the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for sowing seed. One season, by reason of the abundant fertility, shall run into another.

Now you all know, beloved, what this means in the church. It prophecies that in the Church of Christ we shall see the most abundant ingathering of souls. Pharaoh's dream has been enacted again in the last century. About a hundred years ago, if I may look back in my dream, I might have seen seven ears of corn upon one stalk, rank and strong; anon, the time of plenty went away, and I have seen, and you have seen, in your own lifetime, the seven ears of corn thin and withered in the east wind.

The seven ears of withered corn have eaten up and devoured the seven ears of fat corn, and there has been a sore famine in the land. Lo, I see in Whitfield's time, seven bullocks coming up from the river, fat and well-favoured, and since then we have lived to see seven lean kine come up from the same river; and lo! the seven lean kine have eaten up the seven fat kine, yet have they been none the better for all that they have eaten. We read of such marvellous revivals a hundred years ago, that the music of their news has not ceased to ring in our ears; but we have seen, alas, a season of lethargy, of soul-poverty among the

saints, and of neglect among the ministers of God. The product of the seven years has been utterly consumed, and the Church has been none the better. Now, I take it, however, we are about to see the seven fat years again. God is about to send times of surprising fertility to his Church. When a sermon has been preached in these modern times, if one sinner has been converted by it, we have rejoiced with a suspicious joy; for we have thought it something amazing. But, brethren, where we have seen one converted, we may yet see hundreds; where the Word of God has been powerful to scores, it shall be blessed to thousands; and where hundreds in past years have seen it, nations shall be converted to Christ. There is no reason why we should not see all the good that God hath given us multiplied a hundred-fold; for there is sufficient vigour in the seed of the Lord to produce a far more plentiful crop than any we have yet gathered. God the Holy Ghost is not stinted in his power. When the sower went forth to sow his seed, some of it fell on good soil, and it brought forth fruit, some twenty fold, some thirty fold, but it is written, "Some a hundred fold." Now, we have bee sowing this seed, and thanks be to God, I have seen it bring forth twenty and thirty fold; but I do expect to see it bring forth a hundred fold. I do rust that our harvest shall be so heavy, that while we are taking in the harvest, it shall be time to sow again; that prayer meetings shall be succeeded by the enquiry of souls as to what they shall do to be saved, and ere the enquirers' meeting shall be done, it shall be time again to preach, again to pray; and then, ere that is over, there shall be again another influx of souls, the baptismal pool shall be again stirred, and hundreds of converted men shall flock to Christ. Oh! We never can be contented with going on as the churches have been during the last twenty years. I would not be censorious, but solemnly in my own heart I do not believe that the ministers of our churches have been

free from the blood of men. I would not say a hard word if I did not feel compelled to do it, but I am constrained to remind our brethren that let God send what revival he may, it will not exonerate them from he awful guilt that rests upon them of having been idle and dilatory during the last twenty years. Let all be saved who live now; what about those that have been damned while we have been sleeping? Let God gather in multitudes of sinners, but who shall answer for the blood of those men who have been swept into eternity while we have been going on in our canonical fashion, content to go along the path of propriety, and walk around the path of dull routine, but never weeping for sinners, never agonizing for souls. All the ministers of Christ are not awake yet; but the most of them are. There has come a glad time of arousing, the trumpet has been set to their ear, and the people have heard the sound also, and times of refreshing are come from the presence of the Lord our God; but they have not come before they were needed, for much did we require them; otherwise surely the Church of Christ would have died away into dead formality, and if her name had been remembered, it would have been as a shame and a hissing upon the face of the earth.

2. The promise then, seems to me to convey the idea of surprising ingatherings; and I think there is also the idea of amazing rapidity. Notice how quickly the crops succeed each other. Between the harvest and the ploughing there is a season even in our country; in the east it is a longer period. But here you find that no sooner has the reaper ceased his work, or scarce has he ceased it, ere the ploughman follows at his heels. This is a rapidity that is contrary to the course of nature; still it is quite consistent with grace. Our old Baptist churches in the country treat young converts with what they call summering and wintering. Any young believer who wants to join the church in summer, must wait till the winter, and he is put off from

time to time, till it is sometimes five or six years before they admit him; they want to try him, and see whether he is fit to unite with such pious souls as they are. Indeed among us all there is a tendency to imagine that conversion must be a slow work--that as the snail creeps slowly on its way, so must grace move very leisurely in the heart of man. We have come to believe that there is more true divinity in stagnant pools than in lightning flashes. We cannot believe for a moment in a quick method of travelling to the kingdom of heaven. Every man who goes there must go on crutches and limp all the way; but as for the swift beasts, as for the chariots whose axles are hot with speed, we do not quite understand and comprehend that. Now, mark, here is a promise given of a revival, and when that revival shall be fulfilled this will be one of the signs of it--the marvellous growth in grace of those who are converted. The young convert shall that ver day come forward to make a profession of his faith; perhaps before a week has passed over his head you will hear him publicly defending the cause of Christ, and ere many months have gone you shall see him standing up to tell to others what God has done for his soul. There is no need that the pulse of the Church should for ever be so slow. The Lord can quicken her heart, so that her pulse shall throb as rapidly as the pulse of time itself; her floods shall be as the rushing of the Kishon when it swept the hosts of Sisera in its fury. As the fire from heaven shall the Spirit rush from the skies, and as the sacrifice which instantly blazed to heaven, so shall the Church burn with holy and glorious ardour. She shall no longer drive heavily with her wheels torn away, but as the chariot of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, she shall devour the distance in her haste. That seems to me to be one of the promises of the text--the rapidity of the work of grace, so that the plougher shall overtake the reaper.

3. But a third blessing is very manifest here, and one indeed which is simply given to us. Notice the activity of labour which is mentioned in the text. God does not promise that there shall be fruitful crops without labor; but here we find mention made of ploughmen, reapers, treaders of grapes, and sowers of seed; and all these persons are girt with singular energy. The ploughman does not wait, because saith he, the season has not yet come for me to plough, be seeing that God is blessing the land, he has his plough ready, and no sooner is one harvest shouted home than he is ready to plough again. And so with the sower; he has not to prepare his basket and to collect his seed; but while he hears the shouts of the vintage, he is ready to go out to work.

Now, my brethren, one sign of a true revival, and indeed an essential part of it is the increased activity of God's labourers. Why, time was when our ministers, thought that preaching twice on Sunday was the hardest work to which a man could be exposed. Poor souls, they could not think of preaching on a week-day, or if there was once a lecture, they had bronchitis, were obliged to go to Jerusalem and lay by, for they would soon be dead if they were to work too hard. I never believed in the hard work of preaching yet. We find ourselves able to preach ten or twelve times a week, and find that we are the stronger for it,--that in fact, it is the healthiest and most blessed exercise in the world.

But the cry used to be, that our ministers were hardly done by, they were to be pampered and laid by, done up in velvet, and only to be brought out to do a little work occasionally, and then to be pitied when that work was done. I do not hear anything of that talk now-a-days. I meet with my brethren in the ministry who are able to preach day after day, day after day, and are not half so fatigued as the were; and I saw a brother minister this week who has been having

meetings in his church every day, and the people have been so earnest that they will keep him ver often from six o'clock in the evening to two in the morning. "Oh!" said one of the members, "our minister will kill himself." "Not he," said I, "that is the kind of work that will kill no man. It is preaching to a sleepy congregation that kills good ministers, but not preaching to earnest people." So when I saw him, his eyes were sparkling, and I said to him, "Brother, you do not look like a man who is being killed," "Killed, my brother," said he, "why I am living twice as much as I did before; I was never so happy, never so hearty, never so well." Said he, "I sometimes lack my rest, and want my sleep, when my people keep me up so late, but it will never hurt me; indeed," he said, "I should like to die of such a disease as that--the disease of being so greatly blessed." There was a specimen before me of the ploughman who overtook the reaper,--of one who sowed seed, who was treading on the heels of the men who were gathering in the vintage. And the like activity we have lived to see in the Church of Christ. Did you ever know so much doing in the Christian world before? There are grey-headed men around me who have known the Church of Christ sixty years, and I think they can bear me witness that they never knew such life, such vigour and activity, as there is at present. Everybody seems to have a mission, and everybody is doing it. There may be a great many sluggards, but they do not come across my path now. I used to e always kicking at them, and always being kicked for doing so. But now there is nothing to kick at--every one is at work--Church of England, Independents, Methodists, and Baptists--there is not a single squadron that is behindhand; they have all their guns ready, and are standing, shoulder to shoulder, ready to make a tremendous charge against the common enemy. This leads me to hope, since I see the activity of God's ploughmen and vine dressers, that there is a great revival

coming,--that God will bless us, and that right early.

4. We have not yet, however, exhausted our text. The latter part of it says, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine." It is not a likely place for wine upon the mountains. There may be freshets and cataracts leaping down their sides; but who ever saw fountains of red wine streaming from rocks, or gushing out from he hills. Yet here we are told that, "The mountains shall drop sweet wine;" by which we are to understand that conversions shall take place in unusual quarters. Brethren, this day is this promise literally fulfilled to us. I have this week seen what I never saw before. It has been my lot these last six years to preach to crowded congregations, and to see many, many souls brought to Christ; it has been no unusual thing for us to see the greatest and noblest of the land listening to the word of God; but this week I have seen, I repeat, what mine eyes have never before beheld, used as I am to extraordinary things. I have seen the people of Dublin, without exception, from the highest to the lowest, crowd in to hear the gospel. I have known that my congregation has been constituted in a considerable measure of Roman Catholics, and I have seen them listening to the Word with as much attention as though they had been Protestants. I have seen men who never heard the gospel before, military men, whose tastes and habits were not likely to be those of the Puritanic minister, who have nevertheless sat to listen; nay, they have come again--have made it a point to find the place where they could hear the best--have submitted to be crowded, that the might press in to hear the Word, and I have never before seen such intense eagerness of the people to listen to the Gospel. I have heard, too, cheering news of work going on in the most unlikely quarters--men who could not speak without larding their conversation richly with oaths--have nevertheless come to hear the Word; they have listened, and have been convinced, and if the

impression do not die away, there has been something done for them which they will not forget even in eternity. But the most pleasing thing I have seen is this, and I must tell it to you. Hervey once said, "Each floating ship, a floating hell." Of all classes of men, the sailor has been supposed to be the man least likely to be reached by the gospel. In crossing over from Holyhead to Dublin and back--two excessively rough passages-I spent the most pleasant hours that I ever spent. The first vessel that I entered, I found my hands ver heartily shaken by the sailors. I thought, "What can these sailors know of me?" and they were calling me "brother." Of course, I felt that I was their brother too; but I did not know how they came to talk to me in that way. It was not generally the way for sailors to call ministers, brother. There was the most officious attention given, and when I made the enquiry "What makes you so kind?" "Why," said one, "because I love your Master, the Lord Jesus." I enquired, and found that out of the whole crew there were but three unconverted men; that though the most of them had been before without God, and without Christ, yet by a sudden visitation of the Spirit of God they had all been converted. I talked to many of these men, and more spiritual, heavenly-minded men I never yet saw. They have a prayer-meeting every morning before the boat starts, and another prayer-meeting after she comes to port; and on Sundays, when they lay-to off Kingstown or Holyhead, a minister comes on board and preaches the gospel; the cabins are crowded; service is held on deck when it can be; and said an eyewitness to me, "The minister preaches very earnestly, but I should like you to hear the men pray; I never heard such praying before," said he, "they pray with such power, as only a sailor can pray." My heart was lifted up with joy, to think of a ship being made a floating Church--a very Bethel for God. When I came back by another ship I did not expect to see the like; but

it was precisely the same. The same work had been going on. I walked among hem and talked to them. They all knew me. One man took out of his pocket an old leather covered book in Welch--"Do you know the likeness of that man in front?" said he, "Yes," I said, "I think I do: do you read these sermons?" "Yes, sir," replied he, "we have had your sermons on board this ship, and I read hem aloud as often as I can. If we have a fine passage coming over, I get a few around me, and read hem a sermon." Another man old me a story of a gentleman who stood laughing when a hymn was being sung; and one of the men proposed that they should pray for him. They did, and that man was suddenly smitten down, and began on the quay to cry for mercy, and plead with God for pardon. "Ah! Sir," said the sailors, "we have the best proof that there is a God here, for we have seen this crew marvellously brought to a knowledge of the ruth; and here we are, joyful and happy men, serving the Lord."

Now, what shall we say of this, but that the mountains drop sweet wine? The men who were loudest with their oaths, are now loudest with their songs; those who were the most darling children of Satan, have become the most earnest advocates of the truth: for mark you, once get sailors converted, and there is no end to the good they can do. Of all men who can preach well, sailors are the best. The sailor has seen the wonders of God in the deep; the hardy British Tar has got a heart that is not made of such cold stuff as many of the hearts of landsmen; and when that heart is once touched, it gives great big beats; it sends great pulses of energy right through his whole frame; and with his zeal and energy what may he not do, God helping him and blessing him?

5. This seems to be in the text--that a time of revival shall be followed by very extraordinary conversion. But, albeit that in the time of revival, grace is put in extraordinary places, and singular

individuals are converted, yet these are not a bit behind the usual converts; for if you notice the text does not say, "the mountains shall drop wine" merely, but they "shall drop sweet wine." It does not say that the hill shall send forth little streams; but all the hills shall melt. When sinners, profligate and debauched persons, are converted to God, we say, "Well, it is a wonderful thing, but I do not suppose they will be very first class Christians." The most wonderful thing is, that these are the best Christians alive; that the wine which God brings from the hills is sweet wine; that when the hills do melt they all melt. The most extraordinary ministers of any time, have been most extratordinary sinners before conversion. We might never have had a John Bunyan, if it had not have been for the profanity of Elstow Green; we might never have heard of a John Newton, if it had not have been for his wickedness on shipboard. I mean he would not have known the depths of Satan, nor the trying experience, nor even the power of divine grace, if he had not been suffered wildly to stray, and then wondrously to be brought back. These great sinners are not a whit behind the Church. Always in revival you will find his to be the case, that the converts are not inferior to the best of the converts of ordinary seasons--that the Romanist, and the men who have never heard the gospel, when they are converted, are as true in their faith, as hearty in their love, as accurate in their knowledge, and as zealous in their efforts, as the est of persons who have ever been brought to Christ. "The mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt."

II. I must now go on to the other point very briefly--WHAT IS THE DOCTRINAL LESSON WHICH IS TAUGHT IN OUR TEXT: AND WHAT IS TAUGHT TO US BY A REVIVAL? I think it is just this,--that God is absolute monarch of the hearts of men. God does not say here if men are willing; but he gives an absolute promise of a blessing. As much as to say, "I have the

key of men's hearts; I can induce the ploughman to overtake the reaper; I am master of the soil--however hard and rocky it may be I can break it, and I can make it fruitful." When God promises to bless his Church and to save sinners, he does not add, "if the sinners be willing to be saved?" No, great God! Thou leadest free will in sweet captivity, and thy free grace is all triumphant. Man has a free will, and God does not violate it; but the free will is sweetly bound with fetters of the divine love till it becomes more free than it ever was before. The Lord, when he means to save sinners, does not stop to ask hem whether they mean to be saved, but like a rushing mighty wind the divine influence sweeps away every obstacle; the unwilling heart bends before the potent gale of grace, and sinners that would not yield are made to yield by God. I know this, if the Lord willed it, there is no man so desperately wicked here this morning that he would not be made now to seek for mercy, however infidel he might be; however rooted in his prejudices against the gospel, Jehovah hath but to will it, and it is done. Into thy dark heart, O thou who hast never seen the light, would the light stream; if he did but say, "Let there be light," there would be light. Thou mayest bend thy fist and lift up thy mouth against Jehovah; but he is thy master yet--thy master to destroy thee, if thou goest on in thy wickedness; but thy master to save thee now, to change thy heart and turn thy will, as he turneth the rivers of water.

If it were not for this doctrine, I wonder where the ministry would be. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. The power of our preaching is nought--it can do nothing in the conversion of men by itself; men are hardened, obdurate, indifferent; but the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of earnestness, and once let that power be put forth, and what can stand against it? Divine Omnipotence is the doctrine of a revival. We may not see it in ordinary

days, by reason of the coldness of our hearts; but we must see it when these extraordinary works of grace are wrought. Have you never heard the Eastern fables of the dervish, who wished to teach to a young prince the fact of the existence of a God! The fable hath it, that the young prince could not see any proof of the Existence of a First Cause: so the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him, and in his sight the little plant grew up, blossomed, brought forth fruit, and became a towering tree in an hour. The young man lifted up his hands in wonder, and he said, "God must have done this." "Oh, but," said the teacher, thou sayst, "God has done this, because it is done in an hour: hath he not done it, when it is accomplished in twenty years?" It was the same work in both cases; it was only the rapidity that astonished his pupil. SO, brethren, when we see the church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense perhaps of a present God; but when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling to a strong tall monarch of the forest then we say, "This is God." We are all blind and stupid in a measure, and we want to see sometimes some of these quick upgoings, these extraordinary motions of divine influence, before we will fully understand God's power. Learn, then, O Church of God to-day, this great lesson of the nothingness of man, and the Eternal All of God. Learn, disciples of Jesus, to rest on him: look for your success to his power, and while you make your efforts, trust not in your efforts, but in the Lord Jehovah. If ye have progressed slowly, give him thanks for progress; but if now he pleases to give you a marvellous increase, multiply your songs, and sing unto him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his will.

III. I now desire, with great earnestness, as the Holy Ghost shall help me, to make the text A STIMULUS FOR FURTHER EXERTION.

The duty of the Church is not to be measured by her success. It is as

much the minister's duty to preach the gospel in adverse times as in propitious seasons. We are not to think, if God withholds the dew, that we are to withhold the plough. We are not to imagine that, if unfruitful seasons come, we are therefore to cease from sowing our seed. Our business is with act, not with result. The church has to do her duty, even though that duty should bring her no present reward. "If they hear thee not, Son of man, if they perish they shall perish, but their blood will I not require at thine hands." If we sow the seed, and the birds of the air devour it, we have done what we were commanded to do, and the duty is accepted even though the birds devour the seed. We may expect to see a blessed result, but even if it did not come we must not cease from duty. But while this is true so far, it must nevertheless be a divine and holy stimulant to a gospel labourer, to know that God is making him successful. And in the present day we have a better prospect of success than we ever had, and we should consequently work the harder. When a tradesman begins business with a little shop at the corner, he waits a while to see whether he will have any customers. By-and-bye his little shop is crowded; he has a name; he finds he is making money. What does he do? He enlarges his premises; the back yard is taken in and covered over; there are extra men employed; still the business increases, but he will not invest all his capital in it till he sees to what extent it will pay. It still increases, and the next house is taken, and perhaps the next: he says, "This is a paying concern, and therefore I will increase it." My dear friends, I am using commercial maxims, but they are common-sense rules, and I like to talk so. There are, in these days, happy opportunities. There is a noble business to be done for Christ. Where you used to invest a little capital, a little effort, and a little donation, invest more. There never was such heavy interest to be made as now. It shall

be paid back in the results cent, per cent; nay, beyond all that you expected you shall see God's work prospering. If a farmer knew that a bad year was coming, he would perhaps only sow an acre or two; but if some prophet could tell him, "Farmer, there will be such a harvest next year as there never was," he would say, "I will plough up my grass lands, I will stub up those hedges: ever inch of round I will sow." So do you. There is a wondrous harvest coming. Plough up your headlands; root up your hedges; break up your fallow ground, and sow, even amongst the thorns. Ye know not which shall prosper, this or that; but ye may hope that they shall be alike good. Enlarged effort should always follow an increased hope of success.

And let me give you another encouragement. Recollect that even when this revival comes, an instrumentality will still be wanted. The ploughman is wanted, even after the harvest, and the treader of grapes is wanted, however plentiful the vintage; the greater the success the more need of instrumentality. They began at first to think in the North of Ireland that they could do without ministers; but now that the gospel is spread, never was there such a demand for the preachers of the gospel as now. Proudly men said in their hearts, "God has done this without the intervention of man." I say, they said it proudly, for there is such a thing as proud humility; but God made them stoop. He made them see that after all he would bless the Word through his servants--that he would make the ministers of God "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." Brothers and sisters, you need not think that if better times should come, the world will do without you. You will be wanted. "A man shall be precious as the gold of Ophir." They shall take hold of your skirts, and they shall say, "Tell us what we must do to be saved." They shall come to your house; they shall ask your prayers; they shall demand your instructions; and you shall find

the meanest of the flock become precious as a wedge of gold. The ploughman shall never be so much esteemed as when he follows after the reaper, and the sower of seed never so much valued as when he comes at the heels of those that tread the grapes. The glory which God puts upon instrumentality should encourage you to use it.

And now I beseech and intreat you, my dear brothers and sisters, inhabitants of this great City of London, let not this auspicious gale pass away without singular effort. I sometimes fear lest the winds should blow on us, and we should have our sails all furled, and therefore the good ship should not speed. Up with the canvas now. Oh! Put on ever stitch of it. Let every effort be used, while God is helping us. Let us be earnest co-workers with him. Methinks I see the clouds floating hither; they have come from the far west, from the shore of America; they have crossed the sea, and the wind has wafted them till the green isle received the showers in its northern extremity. Lo! the clouds are just now passing over Wales, and are refreshing the shires that border on the principality. The rain is falling on Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire; divine grace is distilling, and the clouds are drawing nearer and nearer to us. Mark, my brethren, they tarry not for men, neither stay they for the sons of men. They are floating o'er our heads to-day. Shall they float away, and shall we still be left as dry as ever? Tis yours to-day to bring down he rain, though tis God's to send the clouds. God has sent this day over this great city a divine cloud of his grace. Now, ye Elijahs, pray it down! To your knees, believers, to your knees. You can bring it down, and only you. "For this thing will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." "Prove me now herewith," saith the Lord of hosts, "and see if I will not open the windows of heaven, and give you such a blessing that you shall not have room to contain it." Will you lose the

opportunity, Christians? Will you let men be lost for want of effort? Will you suffer this all-blessed time to roll away unimproved? If so, the Church of one thousand eight hundred and sixty is a craven Church, and is unworthy of its time; and he among you, men and brethren, that has not an earnest heart to-day, if he be a Christian, is a disgrace to his Christianity. When there are such times as these, if we do not every man of us trust in the plough, we shall indeed deserve the worst barrenness of soul that can possibly fall upon us. I believe that the Church has often been plagued and vexed by her God, because when God has favoured her she has not made a proper use of the favour. "Then," saith he, "I will make thee like Gilboa; on thy mount there shall be no dew; I will bid the clouds that they rain no more rain upon thee, and thou shalt be barren and desolate, till once again I pour out the Spirit from on high." Let us spend this week ins special prayer. Let us meet together as often as we can, and plead at the throne; and each man of you in private be mighty with your God, and in public be diligent to your efforts to ring your fellow-men to Christ.

IV. I have done, when I have uttered a WORD OF WARNING to those of you who know not Christ.

I am aware that I have many here on Sabbath mornings who never were in the habit of attending a place of worship at all. There is many a gentleman here to-day, who would be ashamed in any society, to confess himself a professor of religion. He has never perhaps, for a long time heard the gospel preached; and now there is a strange sort of fascination that has drawn him here. He came the first time out of curiosity--perhaps to make a joke at the minister's expense; he has found himself enthralled; he does not know how it is, but he has been all this week uneasy, he has been wanting to come again, and when he goes away to-day, he will be watching for next Sabbath. He has not

given up his sins, but somehow they are not so pleasurable as they used to be. He cannot swear as he did; if an oath comes out edgeways, it does not roll out in the round form it used to do: he knows better now. Now, it is to such persons that I speak. My dear friends, allow me to express my hearty joy that you are here, and let me also express the hope that you are here for a purpose you do not as yet understand. God has a special favour to you, I do trust, and therefore he has brought you here. I have frequently remarked, that in any revival of religion, it is not often the children of pious parents that are brought in, but those who never knew anything of Christ before. The ordinary means are usually blessed to those who constantly attend hem; but the express effort, and the extraordinary influence of the Spirit, reach those who were outside the pale of nominal Christians, and made no profession of religion. I am I hopes it may meet you. But if you should despise the Word which you have heard; if the impression that has been made--and you know it has been made--should die away, one of the most awful regrets you will ever have when you come to your right sense and reason in another world will be the feeling that you had an opportunity, but that you neglected it. I cannot conceive a more doleful wail than that of the man who cries at last in hell, "The harvest is past--there was a harvest; summer is ended--there was a summer--and I am not saved." To go to perdition in ordinary times is hell; but to go from under the sound of an earnest ministry, where you are bidden to come to Christ, where you are entreated with honest tears to come to Jesus--to go there after you have been warned is to go not to hell merely, but to the ver hell of hell. The core and marrow of damnation is reserved for men who hear the truth, and feel it too, but yet reject it, and are lost. Oh!
My dear hearer, this is a solemn time with you. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may remind you that it may be now or never with you. You

may never have another warning, or if you have it, you may row so hardened that you may laugh at it and despise it. My brother, I beseech thee, by God, by Christ Jesus, by thine own immortal welfare, stop and think now whether it be worth while to throw away the hallowed opportunity which is now presented to thee. Wilt thou go and dance away thine impressions, or laugh them out of thy soul? Ah! man, thou mayest laugh thyself into hell, but thou canst not laugh thyself out of it.

There is a turning point in each man's life when his character becomes fixed and settled. That turning point may be to-day. It may be that there shall be some solemn seat in this hall, which is a man knew its history he would never sit in it,--a seat in which a man shall sit and hear the Word, and shall say, "I will not yield; I will resist the impression; I will despise it; I will have my sins, even if I am lost for them." Mark your seat, friend, before you go; make a blood-red stain across it, that next time we come here we may say, "Here a soul destroyed itself." But I pray the rather that God the Holy Spirit may sweetly whisper in thy heart--"Man, yield, for Jesus invites thee to come to him." Oh, may my Master smile into your face this morning, and say, "I love thy soul; trust me with it. Give up thy sins; turn to me."

O Lord Jesus, do it! And men shall not resist thee. Oh! Show them thy love, and they must yield. Do it, O thou Crucified One, for thy mercy's sake! Send forth thine Holy Spirit now, and bring the strangers home; and in this hall grant thou, O Lord, that many hearts may be fully resigned to thy love, and to thy grace!

Chapter 11

Mr. Evil-Questioning Tried and Executed

A Sermon

(No. 297-98)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 5th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?"--2 Kings 5:12.

PROUD SELF and EVIL QUESTIONING are two of Satan's firmest allies, and two of the chief destroyers of the souls of men. Both of these adversaries attacked Naaman at once. Proud Self fell upon him and gave him the first blow, and Naaman cried, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place and recover the leper." When Proud Self had given his blow, on came his friend and helper, Evil Questioning, and he smote Naaman, and then Naaman said, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" Ah! it is a hard case with a man who has to fight with two such imps as these--his own proud spirit, and that equally wicked spirit of unbelief--asking questions--evil questions--and tempting the Lord our God. Against the first, namely, our proud and righteous self, God has opened all his batteries. The ten commands are like ten great pieces of ordnance, every one of them pointed against our own pride and self righteousness. The Bible is an opponent, even unto death, of everything like boasting, or encouraging the hope of salvation by any efforts of our own. Righteous Self is doomed to be rent in pieces, and his house to be made a dunghill; God

hates him because he is an anti-Christ, and sets himself in opposition to the plenteous atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. As for Evil Questioning, he also doth much ruin among the souls of men. And as it has been my hap of late to meet him very often, I propose this morning to track him to his den, to bring him out to light, and by God's help, if his Spirit shall be here present, to fully defeat him, once for all, to the rescue of many of you. Oh what multitudes of souls have gone to hell asking questions. Not asking, "What must I do to be saved?" but asking questions about matters too high for them; asking, in fact, questions which were only meant to be some excuse for continuing in their sins, pillows for their wicked heads to lean upon; putting queries to ministers, and propounding hard and knotty points that from the ignorance of man they might draw reasons why they should continue in their evil way, should hold on in their wicked course, and so should resist the mercy of God.

Just listen to what Evil Questioning said to Naaman, and what Naaman said as the result of it. If I understand my text aright, it means just this: "What virtue can there be in water? Why should I be told to go and wash at all? I have washed many times and it never cured my leprosy. This dry disease is not so readily got rid of; but supposing there is some medical influence in water, why must I wash in Jordan? It is but a mere ditch, why can I not go and wash in some of my own rivers? We have medicinal streams in our own land. At any rate, Abana and Pharpar are cleaner and wider, and their current is stronger than that of the Jordan, which empties itself into the Dead Sea. And to my mind," he says "it seems to be but a dead river at the very best. May I not go home to Samaria and there wash? A pretty thing that I should come all this way from Samaria to see and then all he should tell me should be, wash and be clean. It is absurd," he says, "it is contrary

to the nature of things; it cannot be possible, and therefore," he save, "I will not go and try it." This, you see, was Evil Questioning. What business was it of Naaman's whether there was any medicinal powers in the water or not? What concern was it to him whether Abana or Pharpar were better or worse than Jordan? he need have nothing to do but with the simple command--"Go, wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." Twas his to obey, not to question. Twas his to fulfill the command, not to enquire into its philosophy.

Now, what Evil Questioning said to Naaman, that he has said to many of you, my hearers. I know there are some of you who are even to-day harbouring this arch-traitor. I pray that God by his grace may find him out this morning, that we may turn him out of your hearts.

I shall try, first of all, to detect this old Mr. Evil Questioning.

When he have found him out, I shall try to describe him to you so that you may know him again the next time you meet him. Then when we have described him, we will bring him out, and by God's help we will execute him; and when we have done that, I shall propose to you that we kill all his children, for they are a very large family. If we may believe John Bunyan, there are some nine or ten of them, and all of them the picture of their old father. I hope we shall have grace to put an end to them as well as the parent.

I. First, then, let us DETECT OLD MR. EVIL QUESTIONING.

He does not go by that name in the world. When he was brought up to be tried as a traitor, he had the impudence to tell the Judge that his name was not Evil Questioning at all. "My Lord," he said, "my proper name is Honest Enquiry, not Evil Questioning. There may be a man of the name of Evil Questioning, but I am not that person at all, and I hope it will never become a sin for a man to make an honest enquiry, and freely to ask the ground of any truth that is propounded to him. For,

my Lord, if we are to take things upon mere credence, matters of faith upon the witness of men, indeed we shall soon make great fools of ourselves. My name is Honest Enquiry,' my Lord, and I think myself to be a very honest citizen." Since Evil Questioning goes by that name, then, and you will not, therefore, readily detect him, I must take you round to see if we can find him out by his speech, for it is not by his name, but by his prating, that you may know this fellow.

Now, Lord Will-be-will, according to John Bunyan, in his allegory of the Holy War, kept an officer called Mr. Diligence, who used to go about listening under people's windows, catching every word he heard, and then he would bring to his Lord, intelligence if any traitor were harboured within the gates. Let me play the part of Mr. Diligence, and we will listen a moment or two while we hear old Mr. Evil Questioning talk. He is a ready fellow; he can talk upon almost any subject; I heard him the other day preach a sermon upon doctrine. He had been hearing a Calvinist minister. This minister had preached the truth as it is in Jesus and he had earnestly exhorted him to lay hold on Christ Jesus, but Mr. Evil Questioning put it thus--"Now, if there are so many to be saved, and there are a certain number of people that are not to be saved, then it can make no difference to me, I had better leave it as it is; for if I am to be saved I shall be saved, and if I am not to be saved I shall not be saved. Besides," said he, "it is irresistible grace that saves men. Now, if God sends that grace into my heart, then I shall be saved, and if he does not, why I cannot do anything, and therefore I may as leave sit still as try and do anything you know, I hear the minister say that faith and repentance are the gift of God; well, if they are the gift of God, how inconsistent he was to exhort me to believe and repent. The man does not understand logic. I shall not believe, I shall not repent. For, do you not see that it does not stand

to reason that I should try to do either the one or the other, because they are both the gift of God." Thus the man satisfied himself, and while I heard him talking, I thought to myself, "I know you Mr. Evil Questioning, well, and I know your father too; you are a descendant of the old fellow that was hanged in Bad Street, in old Bunyan's time, and I only wish I had the hanging of you again." He went another day to hear an Arminian preacher. He heard this preacher talking about the universal love, and the universal mercy of God; and this minister exhorted him to lay hold on Christ. But Mr. Evil Questioning is like a spider, he can suck gall out of any flower; so he went home and he said--"Well, if God is co infinitely merciful, then my sins are very little things indeed. I need make all this fuss and bother about them. I will just go on in them, and no doubt God will not he hard with me at the last, but will just forgive those sins off-hand, whether I believe or not. And, besides," said he, "his mercy is so lasting, that when I come to die I will just say, Lord, have mercy upon me,' and then I shall enter into the kingdom of heaven as well as the best of them. And what is the use of that man exhorting me to believe and to repent, for he told me I might fall from grace? I might as well not begin, as begin now, presently to leave off, so I will wait till the end of my life before I begin, and then I shall run the less risk of falling from grace afterwards." Thus he reasoned with himself. Now whenever you hear that kind of argument, you may know at once there is a traitor there. You have discovered him. That is old Mr. Evil Questioning. Do not lose a moment, run straight up to your chamber, and tell the Lord that you have found out a traitor; ask him to send at once a warrant after him, to arrest the fellow who is doing the utmost he can to destroy your soul.

Sometimes this gentleman does not preach a doctrinal sermon but it is a

practical one. I heard him the other day declaiming thus: "I do not go to any place of worship now-a-day; for to tell the truth, there is such a variety of sects and parties, and one kind of Christians finds fault with another kind, that they are not agreed among themselves, I do not mean to go and listen to them or to pay any attention to them while they are so divided and so bigoted. Besides," he said, "look at the Christians, they are no better than other people, I dare say; their best ministers, if we could catch them in a corner are not at all superior to the rest of mankind, and as to common professors, why I lost ten pounds the other day by one of them who is a deacon. They are not a whit superior to the rest of mankind, I am sure; therefore, I shall not think about religion at all, it is all a farce and a lie. Why should I consider it? I will have nothing to do with it." There is the traitor again. At other times this man will find out some poor, lean, half-starved Christian, who has but little grace and very great misery, and he begins to talk thus. "There are your Christians, see what moping folks they are! How miserable! I never saw such a set of people in my life. Why if I were to go and listen to their minister I should drown myself in a month; they are such miserable wretches. As for me, I say let us hope well and have well; let us live merrily while we may, and if we must ever think about these serious things, let us put it off to the last." Have you never heard that gentleman? Ah, my hearers, there are some of you that have got him in your hearts, and I am only describing what you have often said to yourselves; or if I have not as yet hit upon the precise discourse of old Mr. Evil Questioning, yet I think I have tracked out some of his haunts. Does he not often give a tap at your door, and you say, "Walk in friend Questioning, I have a little matter to talk over with you. The minister has given me a little trouble in my conscience; come and see if you cannot put a plaster over

the wound, so that I may go on in my sins comfortably, and be relieved from the troublesome necessity of changing my life and becoming a Christian." Sometimes this old fellow Evil Questioning goes further and tries, as he says, to lay the axe at the root of the thing. "Why," he says, "this doctrine of the atonement, this salvation by the blood of Christ, I have only just this to say about it, that a rational man cannot believe it at all. It is positively ridiculous to think of a man being saved by the righteousness of somebody else, let the Methodist believe it, I shall not. There is no reason in it." Then he begins to ask questions about the atonement, and proceeds to questions about the decrees, questions about inscrutable matters, questions about effectual calling, about total depravity, and the like, and so he runs through the whole scale of gospel truths and Bible revelations, stopping at each one and asking a question that he may find in each some apology for disobeying God, some excuse for not yielding up his whole heart to Christ, and now believing in him that died to save the souls of men. I think, however, I need not give you a more accurate description than I have done of this archdestroyer. In fact, it were utterly impossible for me to describe to you all his speeches. There is no subject which he will not handle. He is so glib of tongue and he has such sophistry of argument, that he will often persuade a man to believe that the worse is the better reason, and make a man imagine that he is not only excusable, but even commendable, for not being a Christian, and giving up his heart to Christ. Oh! if I could but see this Evil Questioning buried seven fathoms deep, I should feel I had an easy work to do in preaching the gospel; but, alas! when I have been the most earnest, my hearers have raised a question on the discourse, instead of yielding to its precepts; and when I have sought to explain the doctrine and lay it down by the rule of the Word, I find instead of producing conviction,

that one and another will be questioning the orthodoxy or the heterodoxy of it. No fruit is brought forth because ye suffer not the seed to enter into your hearts, there to work effectually to the saving of your souls. Oh, fools and slow of heart, to be for ever asking questions while time is flying, and men are dying, and hell is filling--to be questioning when there is but a step between you and death--to be trying to unriddle mysteries and to unravel secrets when you are on the borders of the tomb and your souls may soon be required of you. Oh, fools, I say, and slow of heart, but surely so ye will be to the end of the chapter, unless sovereign grace shall open your eyes to see in the face of this Mr. Evil Questioning the marks and lineaments of a child of Satan, and unless God shall give you grace to turn him out of doors, to expel him instantly, find have no more to do with him as long as you live.

But do you know while I was going my rounds this morning looking after Mr. Evil Questioning, I happened to stop at the door of a house that had the blood-mark over the lintel and I was very much surprised to hear a voice just like old Mr. Questioning's inside that house. I could not believe my own ears, but I saw my own name on the door, and so I thought I might venture to enter and lo, I found this old villain sitting at my own table, and what think you he was saying? Why he was talking like this, "God has promised that you shall hold on your way, but then you have so many temptations you cannot. He has promised to bless your ministry, but then the hearts of men are so hard, you might just as well give up preaching." He began to question the promises and asked how they could be fulfilled, and was beginning to make me question the vitality of my own religion Get you gone, sir, I will have nothing to do with you, and if I meet you again I hope by the grace of God I shall be able to heave a stone that shall sink deep in your old

crazy pate. Begone, sir, and have nought to do with me. With the child of God thou art a hated intruder. Who am I that I should question the Almighty? Who is the finite that he should ask the Infinite where is his power to fulfill his promise? No, my God:

"I trust the all-creating voice,
And faith requires no more,"

II. Having thus detected Mr. Evil Questioning, we will go on to

DESCRIBE HIM.

Mr. Evil Questioning often boasts that he is the child of Human Reason; but I will let you know a secret or two about his parentage. Mr. Human Reason has once a very respectable man. He had a country-seat in the gardens of Paradise, and he was then great and honorable. He served his God with all his might and many a great and marvellous thing did he discover for the good of mankind; at that time he had a family, and they were all like himself, right good and loyal. But after the fall this man married again, and he took to himself one called Sin to be his partner, and this old Evil Questioning was one that was born after the fall. He does not belong to the first family at all. The first family was not so numerous as the last. There was one called Right Judgment born at that time. I hope he is still alive, and I believe he is. But the second family was very black and of tainted blood. They did not take at all after the father, except in one point, that at the time of the fall Mr. Human Reason lost his country-seat at Paradise, and together with the rest of the servants of Adam fell from his high estate and became perverted and depraved. His children are like him in their depravity, but not in their power of reasoning. They take after their mother, and they always have a predilection for sin, so that they "put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." The old gentleman never mentions his mother's name

if he can help it. He always likes to boast that he is a lineal descendant of Human Reason, and so indeed he is, but he is a descendant of fallen Human Reason, not of Human Reason as it was in its glorious perfection. Now, all the powers of Adam were by the fall spoiled and ruined. They are there, but their bias was turned from that which is good to that which is evil, and now reason is not a trustworthy guide. Enlightened by the Spirit of God it can judge righteous judgment, but unenlightened and uninstructed, its bias is towards that which shall excuse man in his rebellion, which shall dishonor God, and which shall seek to raise the human race in proud rebellion against their Lord and Master.

Understand then, that the parentage of Evil Questioning lies here; man's perverted reason meets with man's love of sin, and these twain do join to bring forth these evil questions. It is not your reason that makes you talk against God, except it be your perverted reason. It is your love of sin that sets your reason on the wide-awake watch to try and discover some difficulty, and to make that a pretense why you should not be obedient to the heavenly command. Do not believe yourself when you repeat the tale told you by Satan, that you are only making honest enquiries--do not believe it for a minute. The honest enquiry is content with "It is written," and there it stops. Besides, if not content with this, the truth of the Bible is proved by the most conclusive logic. It is proved too by arguments against which all the gates of hell can never prevail. There are many excellent works which have been written, and all the arguments of modern sceptics have been refuted a thousand times over. Every objection that man can make has been already broken in pieces, and if a man be honest in his enquiries, he cannot long remain an unbeliever. Do not believe that your questioning springs from honesty, but be honest with yourself, and

acknowledge this, that you do not love the gospel because it is too hard for you--it wants you to give up sins that you love too much, to renounce them, and because of this, you begin to question its truth. If it did not come upon you so sorely, and deal with you so summarily, you would believe it. But because it will have you give up your sins, you go in quest of a doubt, and put in plea after plea to gain time and hold on with the world. Though you do not doubt the justice of the law, or the truth of the gospel, ye vexatiously question both. And yet you know very well that it is beyond your questioning, for it is the eternal verity of the Eternal God.

I have thus described the old man's parentage; shall I now tell you where he had his education? After Mr. Evil Questioning was born, he was put to the school of that old schoolmaster who has taught a great many of you--Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and this Mr. Worldly Wiseman used to make him read out of a book, called "Human Maxims," and this man has learned all the logic-art of that book of Human Maxims--a book very much patronized by the sacred consistory of hell. They greatly delight in it, and would have it spread everywhere; and they would have even the prophets of God bow their knee to this Baal, and take "for doctrines the commandments of men." No wonder, therefore, that being bad at first, and essentially vicious, this education was just suited to develop his powers, and he has gone from bad to worse, till he has been known at times to question the very existence of a God, the immortality of the soul, the truth of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, in fact; he has questioned everything which can be dear to a true-hearted man, every truth which can sustain the soul in the midst of its troubles, and give it light in its seasons of darkness.

And now to come nearer still to him. I have told you his parentage and education, now as to his character. If,. you notice this man, it is

only his talking that will strike you, and you will observe this about his talk, that he speaks about things of religion in a very different style from what he thinks about things of the world. If you meet him and he is buying or selling, he talks very rationally indeed; but when he comes to make excuses for himself and tell you why he is not converted, he talks like a fool, as he is. He would not himself act in the world upon the theories that he adopts in religion. Did I not tell you that I heard him say once, that because God had decreed therefore he would do nothing? Now you would expect to find him if he were honest in what he said, going out into the world and folding his arms, and saying, "Now if I am to get rich I shall get rich, and so there is an end of it; and if I am not to get rich I shall not get rich, and therefore I shall not work." No, he is as busy as a bee when he is about the things of the world, and yet he is as idle as possible when he is meddling with the things of Christ. This same man, if he has a field to sow, he knows very well that if God has ordained a harvest there will be a harvest--but he sows for all that. He can understand in his business how free-agency is quite consistent with Divine Sovereignty. He understands when he is abroad how the decree of God does not at all limit the free action of man, but when he comes to matters of godliness with regard to his own soul, then he sees a wonderful difficulty there. Ah! he sees it because he wants to see it, and a man can see anything he likes to see if he does not want to do a thing that is uncomfortable and unpleasant. If you want an excuse for going to hell, you can find a thousand, every one as bad as the other, and Mr. Evil Questioning will furnish you with any quantity of them to suit every particular case. He has excuses that will suit the Frenchman and excuses that will suit the Englishman. He has a stock of common excuses just adapted to be sold retail to the poor, and he has many a

refined excuse of every shade and color to suit the taste of the rich. No man like him. If you want to perish, you may do it logically. If you want to go to hell riding on a syllogism, he will assist you. He will give you the most rational and comfortable conveyance if you want to go there. Only to go to his shop, he will not keep you a single moment, but serve you across the counter with the most polite bow, and send you on your way rejoicing towards the depths of perdition.

You will thus detect Mr. Evil Questioning, because he uses a logic in spiritual things that he would not use in temporal things. Here is another way by which you may discover him. This man, when he is talking about the Infinite God, always measures him by the finite rule of man. When God is in the question, who is not to be limited nor to be grasped by our comprehension, he deals as freely with the matter as if it were a mere thing of ells or inches, or of ounces and pounds. Omnipotence he forgets, and omniprescence, and omniscience, and eternity,--all these attributes of God he casts away, and he talks to God, and talks about God, as if God were nothing different from the creature that his hands have made. Have you never heard him say, "How can such a thing be done?" If he did but stop and think, he would know that it is irrational to use the word can, when he is speaking of an Omnipotent One. He will often say, "Will such a thing that is promised be accomplished?" If he did but pause, he would recollect that to ask a question as to whether a thing will be done about a God who is true and faithful, is to put a wicked and blasphemous question. But still he will do it. He deals with God's promises as if they were the draft-notes of a rogue. He treats God's doctrines as if they were the utterance of a raving maniac. He will deal with substantial verities as if they were frothy dreams, the mere speculations of a deluded brain. Strange villain that he is, daring to lift his mouth against heaven,

and spit his blasphemous questions against the very existence and power of the Most High.

You may know him again by another sign, for he always draws his arguments from exceptions. He meets a miserable Christian--he knows very well that where there is one miserable Christian there are a thousand happy ones--but then he puts these thousand happy ones behind. It is the one miserable one that he fixes his attention upon. If he meets with one fallen professor, he knows that there are ten thousand Christians that stand upright in the hour of temptation, and will not bend in the blast of the terrors of the world when they come against him, seeking to turn him from his upright course--but no, he forgets all these; he only thinks of that one hypocrite, or that one professor, who was overtaken in an evil hour, and then he makes a syllogism like this--"One Christian has proved to be a hypocrite, therefore, as it is a bad thing to be a hypocrite, I will not be a Christian." Now, what an argument! And yet this satisfies some of you. There are some of you, when you have been once taken in by a man, will say, "Ah, well! I will never make a profession of religion. So-and-so made a profession; he was a bad one; therefore I will not have ought to do with it." Where is the force of this argument? If there are bad Christians, that is a presumption in itself that there are good ones, for if ever you see a bad sovereign in circulation, you may be sure there are some good ones, for if they were all bad we would none of us take any of them. Be sure of it, then, the name of Christian would cease to be, unless there were some good ones to keep up the current coin--the real stock in trade--on which the world grows rich. And suppose they were all bad, is that any reason why you should not be true and honest? If the church were all hypocrites, at least let me be an honest man, and serve my God truly, and with all my heart. That is the proper way of reasoning. But Evil

Questioning takes exceptions, and considers them as if they were rules, and then from the exceptions draws a deduction which would not be logical even if they were the rule, but which, seeing it is based upon the exceptions, is without a basis at all, and sinks to the ground as a mere wanton wilful falsehood.

I will only keep you one more minute upon this part of my subject. You may always know Mr. Evil Questioning by this one fact, that he invariably draws his conclusions from his wishes. When I have got an argument on hand, and the conclusion is contrary to what I would like it to be, I always think there is more likelihood that my reasoning is correct; but if the conclusion is just what my carnal heart would like it to be, I say I am afraid that my logic was at fault somewhere; for if I draw a conclusion that pleases myself, I ought to be very careful, especially when it is a matter in which my soul is concerned. We draw Justice with a bandage over her eyes, holding a pair of scales: now, whenever we are trying other people, that is how our justice ought to be meted out, and so it should be when we are trying ourselves. But, my dear friends, whenever we try ourselves, we are apt to move the bandage a little up, that the right eye may see just a little, that we may manage to put, somehow or other, a little extra weight in the scale that will favor ourselves. No man is so partial a judge as the man that is trying his own character. We are very severe with others, but we are very lenient to ourselves; we keep our swords well sharpened for our enemies; but if we do hit ourselves it is with the back of the blade; we never venture to strike deep and we always wish to have a little salve ready, some kind of extenuation. Habitually almost without knowing it we shake hands with ourselves very often, and say, "You are not so bad a fellow after all, I thought there was something amiss with you, and so there certainly is; but still there is not so much wrong

with you as there is with a great many people, and you are a very respectable individual taking you for all in all." Now, if that is the conclusion you come to, suspect it, there is a flaw in the logic somewhere. Just look the reasoning through again. Cast that sum up once more, if it comes to this result, "Thou art rich," cast it up again, there is an extra figure that you have put in; for the right conclusion is, if you are an unconverted man, you are naked, and poor, and miserable. Do not believe the arithmetic or the logic which would bring you to any other conclusion than this.

III. Having thus described this old enemy after whom I am in full pursuit; I pause awhile and go on to my third division, which is bringing him out TO EXECUTE HIM.

I must give you a bit from John Bunyan's Holy War, for it is so wonderfully suggestive, and so thoroughly worthy of its quaint author. Mr. Evil Questioning was detected harbouring four doubters, who had come to attack the town of Mansoul; when he was brought up, the indictment was that he had studied the ruin of the town of Mansoul, that he had feloniously and treacherously harboured four of the king's enemies, and that he had expressed in the hearing of one Mr. Diligence, his wish that there were ten thousand such doubters in Mansoul. The old fellow when he was brought before the bar, first denied his name, and said his real name was Mr. Honest Enquiry, but when it was proved that he was old Evil Questioning, for Lord Will-be-will in the time of his evil estate had known him very intimately, then the old fellow pleaded "Not Guilty," and he began at once to utter his defense. "I answer," said Evil Questioning "the men that came into my house were strangers, and I took them in, and is it now become a crime in Mansoul for a man to entertain strangers? That I also nourished them is true, and why should my charity be blamed? As for the reason why I wished ten

thousand of them in Mansoul, I never told it to the witnesses nor to themselves. I might wish them to be taken, and so might wish well to the town of Mansoul. I also bid them take heed that they fell not into the Captain's hands, but that might be because I am unwilling that any man should be slain, and not because I would have the king's enemies escape." So Mr. Evil Questioning was true to his name, he kept on questioning till the verdict was given, the sentence of death pronounced, and carried into execution; for they hanged him, as Bunyan says, opposite the door of his own house at the top of Bad Street, Ah! but I am afraid that he is alive now, still living and going about: I wish therefore to bring him up again to trial, and we will see if we cannot bring some charges against him; we will empanel an honest jury, and I know what the sentence will be, we shall lead him out to execution.

Men and brethren, if you have been questioning, instead of believing, if you have been making enquiries, instead of saying, "What must I do to be saved?" which is the only allowable question, let me first beg of you to drive out this Evil Questioning, because he is a traitor to the King of heaven. He does not wish your good, but your ill; more than this, he is sent by Satan to prevent your obeying the commands of God: he is come to betray you. Oh I listen not to his words, though they are smoother than butter, for inwardly they are drawn swords: the drift of all he says is to keep you unreconciled to God. The great end of all he says is to make you wander further and further from the central point of bliss, to make you forsake the cross, to make you follow the devices of your own heart, and so bring upon yourself inevitable destruction. Oh! I beseech you, drive him out, because he is a traitor to the great King to whom all your allegiance is due. He wants to make you an enemy to God, and to keep you so. Out with him, I pray you. Hang him! let a

straight end be put to him at once: let him no more delude and ruin your souls, and make you persevere in disobedience to God.

And then, again, I beseech you turn him out, for he is a liar. All the conclusion to which he has brought you are false ones, and you know they are. When you have sometimes in company bragged a little, and when a hard word has been said that has come home to your conscience, when you have put on a stout confidence and have begun to insinuate some doubts, you know very well you are not speaking honestly. You know there is a hell, though you often laugh at the idea; you know there is a world to come, though you argue against it. You are conscious that there is a God, though you yourself will sometimes deny it, you know very well that every conclusion to which this false reasoning of yours has brought you, is a downright falsehood, and a libel against the common-sense and sterling honesty of your nature. Oh! turn out, then, this wretch who is a descendant of the Father of Lies; and let us, each man of us, lay our hands on him as witnesses, and take up our stone to stone him.

Another accusation I bring against him is this: he has led you into a world of mischief. This habit of questioning has often blunted the edge of some sermon that you have heard; when the Word was coming right home to your conscience, this Mr. Evil Questioning has held up a shield and prevented the point from entering into your heart; besides that, have you not sometimes when under the influence of his delusive logic gone off to the place where your lust has been cultivated, and where your conscience hag been lulled to sleep? You know if it had not been for these questions, you would not be found so often in the tavern, or in the casino, or in the midst, perhaps, of even worse associations than these. It is because you have tried to make yourself an infidel that you have been able to go into sin. You have felt that if you did

behave, sin would become unpleasant; in fact, you would be too gross a fool if you professed to believe, and then afterwards run and cut your own throat, and destroy your own soul, by persevering in your iniquities. Oh! I beseech you, remember the mischief this wicked habit has done you; it has brought you low, very low, even to the gates of hell; and if you persevere much longer in it, as I pray God you may not, it will bring you within the portals of hell. And then, when the gate of fire is shut, there is no arm that can open it, there is no question, no subtle questioning, that can administer a drop of comfort to you; there is no puzzling particle of metaphysics that can be as a drop of water to cool your burning tongue. The questioning that damned you shall be the tormentor that shall vex you, and your brain carried through fiery speculations shall for ever be horrified and alarmed by new difficulties and new mysteries, which shall be as faggots for the flames of hell for ever and for ever. Oh! let us bring out this Evil Questioning, and hang him on a gallows high as the gallows of Haman, and God grant that we may never see him again.

I have one other charge, and then I shall have closed up the accusation. Men and brethren, this man must die, for he has been a murderer. Oh! what millions of fools has Evil Questioning sent to hell! There are many gates to hell, but this is one of the widest and it is one of the most frequented, because it is a respectable gate. Men do not like to go do on to perdition without having some reason, some logic to back them up, so they carry a lie in their right hand, and then they go there quietly, to meet their damnation logically, and to reason about the flames of hell when they are lying in them. Oh! my dear hearers, let us have done with this Evil Questioning, for if not, he will ruin us, as surely as he has ruined others. Be satisfied with "Thus saith the Lord." Take the Bible as it stands. Do not for ever be

raising these doubts. Do not be busying yourself with secret things that are no business of yours whatever. Do not for ever be quibbling and putting these hard knotty points to us, while your poor soul is perishing for lack of that grace which alone can save you from the wrath to come. "Well," says one, "but I mean to ask questions a little longer." Ah! but my dear friend, remember the habit of evil questioning grows upon a man; and at last God will fill you with your own devices. Draws there nigh a day when you will want to believe and you cannot--when questioning will come to be a strong delusion, so that you shall believe a lie--when from merely trying to be an infidel, you shall become at last a master in the arts of Belial. Yea, you shall take your degree of Doctor in Damnation, and shall sit in the seat of the scorner, condemned, already hardened in your sin, and ripened for the fire, as those who are ready to be burned. God grant that may not be the consequence; but it will be unless Mr. Evil Questioning be speedily brought out, given up to the gallows, and never more harboured in your house.

I have thus spoken in the form of an allegory. If I have put in some words of pleasantry, it was that I might engage your attention. I feel the subject to be awfully solemn, and it is necessary that we should all think of it, and I hope you will think of it none the less because it has been clothed somewhat in an allegorical form, and because I have tried to represent this evil habit as though it were an evil being that sought your destruction. My concluding head is especially addressed to the people of God, and to them I hope it will be very interesting.

IV. Old Mr. Evil Questioning is the father of a large family, and John Bunyan tells you about his family. He says, he married one called Miss No-hope, she was the daughter of old Dark, and when old Dark was dead, her uncle Incredulity took her and brought her up as his own daughter,

and then he gave her to old Evil Questioning, and he had by her several children. I will give you the names of them, because it shall be my earnest endeavor to fire a shot at them this morning, as well as at their old father. Their names are these--Mr. Doubt, Mr. Legal Life, Mr. Unbelief, Mr. Wrong Thoughts of Christ, Mr. Clip Promise, Mr. Carnal Sense, Mr. Live-by-Feeling, and Mr. Self Love. All these were the offspring of the father, and against all these a warrant was issued by the prince Immanuel that they should be hunted down, and every one of them given to the sword.

Now, I will take the eldest son, there is Mr. Doubt,--Is he not the child of Evil Questioning? Why, you can see his father's image in his face. You remember Mr. Doubt called one day at the tent of Sarah, and his father with him, and Sarah said, "Shall I who am ninety years of age have pleasure? shall these breasts afford nourishment for a child?" Here was Evil Questioning; and then Sarah laughed. That was Mr. Doubt that played off a bit of his satire, and set her laughing. Ah! had she but believed, she might have attained a nobler commendation. It almost tarnishes her fair reputation that we must remember this of her--she was the woman who laughed at God's promise, as though it were impossible. Brothers and sisters, Mr. Doubt has often called at your house and made you cast reflections on the promise. He has said, "How can it be true? Such a sinner as you, so weak, so vile, so unworthy." Oh believer, the promise is true; God has pledged his word and stamped his covenant with his oath. When you see a promise, never doubt it; for Doubt is the descendant of Evil Questioning, and he is a Diabolian from the birth up. However, I am rather apprehensive, though I publish his name to-day, and though I were to give you his portrait in the Hue anti Cry, he will not get arrested just yet, or if he be arrested, I am afraid he will break his prison, and be at liberty again. For this Mr.

Doubt is everywhere about the country; and I find him in many a secluded nook by the way-side, troubling some poor woman on her dying bed, and I find him, too, in many a hall where the rich man is thinking about Christ, but is kept back by this troublesome intruder, who whispers a doubt as to whether Christ will receive him. He is everywhere--but drive him out; make him hide his head, let him not be pampered and fed as he is by some people, lest Doubt grow into Despair, and you should lose your comfort, and bring sorrow into your heart for ever.

Another child is Mr. Clip-Promise. Do you know him? He does not doubt the promise, but he clips the edge of it. He makes out that it will not all be fulfilled, only a part of it. Now there is a proclamation issued against Mr. Clip Promise, that whoever will arrest him shall be greatly honored, for he is a notorious villian, by whose doings much of the King's coin was abased, therefore it was expedient that he should be made a public example. And, Bunyan says, "They did take him, and they first set him in the pillory, and afterwards they tied his hands behind him and they whipped him through the streets of Mansoul, bidding all the children and servants whip him, and then at last they hanged him. And," says mine author, "this may seem very hard treatment, but when one considers how much loss the town of Mansoul may sustain by the clipping of the promises which are the coins with which they trade, I can only say I hope that all his kith and kin may be treated with the like severity." Oh! it you have attempted to cut the promise down, have done with it I pray you; and do take it as it stands in all its plenteousness of grace and all its sufficiency. Judge it not by your own notions, but take it as it comes from God, shining and glittering from the mint of heaven. Take it at its full current value with the merchants, and you shall surely have its equivalent in the fulfilments

which God will work to you in his providence and his grace. Moreover, I will say this unto thee, the more thou tradest with this precious coin the more thou wilt prize it, as Eskine sings--

"Let thy experience sweet declare,
If able to remind,
A Bochim here, a Bethel there,
Thy Savior made thee find."

Then there is Mr. Wrong-thoughts of Christ. Do you know him? Well I do not know that I have met him very lately, but there was a time when he and I had a great battle, and I think he had the worst of it, for by grace I was enabled to strike him very hard. Do you know what this fellow had the impudence to tell me? He said, "Oh! Christ will never receive such a sinner as you are." And when I had come to Christ, and he received me, he said, "Oh! Christ will not hold you fast." He will it you let him, but then you will not let him, for you are such a sinner he cannot hold you, and he will not. He has often made me doubt my Master's immutability or his faithfulness, or his power to save. But as far as I am personally concerned of late, I was able to seize him, and I have laid him in prison; I think he is dying of a consumption, for I have not heard much of him lately. Glad enough shall I be to have him buried once for all. And if any of you are troubled with him, lock him up, do not let him keep abroad, for Wrong-thoughts of Christ is one of the worst spirits that ever came up from the pit. What! to think badly of Christ, to think of him who is all goodness, as if he were hard-hearted or unkind. Begone, Wrong thoughts of Christ, we will not harbour thee but will put thee in durance vile, and there shalt thou starve and die.

There are two others whom some of you may have known, Mr. Legal Life, and Mr. Live-by-Feeling. I think they were twins. Mr. Legal Life

sometimes gets hold of the Christian and makes him judge himself by legal evidences, and not by evangelical evidence. When the Christian has kept a commandment, Mr. Legal Life will say, "There now you live by your works." He knows that Christians would die by their works, and that the best of them can only live by faith. And when a Christian has made a slip, and has not kept the commandment, in comes Mr. Legal Life, and he says, "You are a lost soul, for you have not kept the commandment;" though he knows right well, "that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Yet he tries to make his life by the law which no Christian ever did do or ever will do, for the law is of death and not of life.

Then there is Mr. Live-by-Feeling, who makes us judge ourselves according to what we feel. If we feel happy and devout, "Oh," he says. "now you are in a blessed frame, the Master will accept you," anon you feel unhappy, and dull, and cold, and dead. "Oh," says Mr. Live-by-Feeling, "you are no child of God, or else you would not be like this." Now catch both these fellows, if you can, and away with them; away with such fellows from the earth. It is not fit that they should live. Come, ye Christians, and crucify them, nail them up, they are relatives of the old flesh, and let them die with the flesh; they will never bring you any good; they are the down-right direct opponents of the gospel. Away with them, for "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and if we believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ, neither our feelings nor our efforts can ever save our souls in any measure whatsoever. Legal Life, and Live-by-Feeling must be put to the death.

And now I want your attention, because here is a fine opportunity for some of you to become celebrated and rich, if you are able to fully the commission. One of the children of old Evil Questioning was Mr. Carnal-Sense. Now John Bunyan tells us, and I believe that he is right,

at least I have his authority for it, and that is no mean authority, that there is a proclamation set up in the market place at Man-Soul, that whosoever shall bring Mr. Carnal-Sense, dead or alive, to the King Immanuel, shall be made a nobleman, shall have a right to sit at the King's table every day, and moreover, he shall be made keeper of the treasury of the city of Man-Soul. There you see is a noble opportunity for you. But, with John Bunyan, "It is rather unfavorable if you are ambitious; many there were that spent much of their time in endeavoring to discover him, but they have never been able to find him; still it is well known that he is abroad, and that he frequents poor men's houses by night very much to their sorrow and grief." Now if you can but lay hold of him, see how you shall be exalted; you shall have daily fellowship with your king, and you shall have the whole treasure of God to make you rich. Well, blessed be God, we do know one thing, that is, that if we cannot kill Carnal-Sense, yet we can starve him a little, and if he will come abroad it shall be by night, for we will not let him come abroad in the day. Old Carnal-Sense, what mischief has he done!

"Judge not the Lord by carnal sense,
But trust him for his grace,
Behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face."

Oh! Christians, get rid of the thought that thou canst judge thy God by carnal appearances, do not take the promise by the providence, but the providence by the promise. Do not read the book of life by thy life, but read thy life by the book of life. Have done with Carnal Sense and thou shalt be happy, thou shalt have daily fellowship with God and all the riches of his treasury.

There remains another one upon whom I must speak just for a minute. It

is one called Mr. Self-Love. Ah, he is one of the biggest of the children of Mr. Evil Questioning. Now Mr. Self-Love was tried and condemned to die, but he had so many friends in the city, that they did not like to hang him outright. There was, however, a brave man in the king's army, a common soldier, a man that was need to sleep out in the fields at night, and to do much hard work--his name was Mr. Self-Denial, and coming out from the midst of the crowd, just when the prisoner was going to be acquitted, he said, "If such villains as these are winked at in Man-soul I will lay down my commission." He then took him from the crowd and had him among the soldiers, and there he was put to death. For this, the king made the common soldier a lord, and he was honored in the town of Mansoul. "Though," says Bunyan, "there were a good many people in the town that did not like it, and they used to mutter at it, but they did not say much as long as king Immanuel was there. Oh, do you know that old Self-Love? You will never get rid of him unless you get Mr. Self-Denial to help you; unless you are ready to deny the affections and lusts, to pluck out right eyes, and cut off right hands, and to yield up one delight after another, that so self may be trodden under foot, and Jesus Christ may be all in all.

There is one other child. I have left him to the last; and then I have done with the family--Mr. Unbelief "Now," says Bunyan, "Unbelief was a nimble fellow." He was often caught, but he was like the hero of the wicked Shepherd, he always broke his prison and was out again. Although he has often been kept in hold, he has always escaped, and he is every day about somewhere or other. Oh, brothers and sisters, Unbelief is abroad to-day, he will be attacking some of you, seeking to rend your jewels from you. I beseech you, do not harbour him, but do live by faith, remember you how many die by unbelief; therefore cling ye--cling to Christ.

"And when thine eye of faith is dim,

Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;

And at his footstool bow the knee,

So Israel's' God thy peace shall be."

When thine evidences are dark and thy joys are gone, still throw thine arms about the cross; and remember, thou canst never perish trusting there.

And thou, poor sinner, this last word to thee. Have done with thy questionings, end thy questions all of them, at the cross of Christ. Look to my Master now: a look will save you. Trust him, and you are saved--saved now and saved for ever. Cast yourself on him. Have done with your own wit and wisdom; take him to be your wisdom, your righteousness, your all, and he will not cast you away. Poor soul! he will take you in, though you are black as Satan himself. He will wash you and make you clean; he will take you to himself, and put the crown of immortality upon your head; he will robe you in the garments of glory; and you shall be his in that day when he maketh up his jewels.

Chapter 12

Sin Immeasurable

A Sermon

(No. 299)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 12th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Who can understand his errors?"--Psalm 19:12.

WHAT WE KNOW IS AS NOTHING when compared with what we know not. The sea of wisdom has cast up a shell or two upon our shore, but its vast depths have never known the footstep of the searcher. Even in natural things we know but the surface of matters. He that has traveled the wide world over, and has descended into its deepest mines, must yet be aware that he has viewed but a part of the mere crust of this world; that as for its vast center, its mysterious fires and molten secrete, the mind of man hath not as yet conceived them. If you will turn your eyes above, the astronomer will tell you that the undiscovered stars, that the vast mass of worlds which form the milky way, and the abundant masses of nebulae--that those vast clusters of unknown worlds, as infinitely exceed the little that we can explore, as a mountain exceeds a grain of sand. All the knowledge which the wisest men can possibly attain in a whole life-time, is no more than what the child may take up from the sea with his tiny cup, compared with the boundless waters which fill their channels to the brim. Why, when we are at the wisest, we have but come to the threshold of knowledge, we have taken but one step in that race of discovery which we may have to pursue throughout all eternity. This is equally the case with regard to things of the heart, and the spiritual things which concerns this little world called

man. We know nothing but the surface of things. Whether I talk to you of God, of his attributes, of Christ, of his atonement, or of ourselves and our sin, I must confess that as yet we know nothing but the exterior; that we cannot comprehend the length, the breadth, the height of any one of these matters.

The subject of this morning--our own sin, and the error of our own hearts, is one which we sometimes think we know, but of which we may always be quite sure that we have only began to learn, and that when we have learned the most we shall ever know on earth, the question will still be pertinent, "Who can understand his errors?"

Now, this morning I propose first of all, very briefly indeed, to explain the question; then at greater length to impress it upon our hearts; and lastly we will learn the lessons which it would teach us.

I. First, then, let me EXPLAIN THE QUESTION.--"Who can understand his errors?"

We all acknowledge that we have errors. Surely we are not so proud as to imagine ourselves to be perfect. If we pretend to perfection we are utterly ignorant, for every profession of human perfection arises from perfect ignorance. Any notion that we are free from sin should at once discover to us that we abound in it. To vindicate my boast of perfection, I must deny the Word of God, forget the law, and exalt myself above the testimony of truth. Therefore, I say, we are willing to confess that we have many errors, yet who amongst us can understand them? Who knows precisely how far a thing may be an error which we imagine to be a virtue? Who among us can define how much of iniquity is mingled with our uprightness--how much of unrighteousness with our righteousness? Who is able to detect the component parts of every action, so as to see the proportion of motive which would constitute it right or wrong? He were indeed a crafty man who should be able to

unmask an action and divide it into essential motives which are its component parts. Where we think we are right, who knows but what we may be wrong? Where even with the strictest scrutiny we have arrived at the conclusion that we have done a good thing, who among us is quite sure that he has not been mistaken? May not the apparent good be so marred with internal motive as to become a real evil?

Who again can understand his errors, so as always to detect a fault when it has been committed? The shades of evil are perceptible to God, but not always perceptible to us. Our eye has been so blinded and its vision so ruined by the fall, the absolute black of sin we can detect, but the shades of its darkness we are unable to discern. And yet the slightest shadow of sin is perceptible to God, and that very shade divides us from the Perfect One, and causes us to be guilty of sin. Who amongst us has that keen method of judging himself, so that he shall be able to discover the first trace of evil? "Who can understand his errors?" Surely no man will claim a wisdom so profound as this. But to come to more common matters by which perhaps we may the more understand our text. Who can understand the number of his errors? the mightiest mind could not count the sins of a single day. As the multitude of sparks from a furnace, so innumerable are the iniquities of one day. We might sooner tell the grains of sand on the sea-shore, than the iniquities of one man's life. A life most purged and pure is still as full of sin as the sea is full of salt. And who is he that can weigh the salt of the sea, or can detect it as it mingles with every fluid particle? But if he could do this, he could not tell how vast an amount of evil saturates our entire life, and how innumerable are those deeds, and thoughts, and words of disobedience, which have cast us out from the presence of God, and caused him to abhor the creatures which his own hands have made.

Again, even if we could tell the number of human sins, who, in the next place, could estimate their guilt? Before God's mind the guilt of one sin, and such an one as we foolishly call a little one--the guilt of one sin merits his eternal displeasure. Until that one iniquity be washed out with blood, God cannot accept the soul and take it to his heart as his own offspring. Though he has made man, and is infinitely benevolent, yet his sense of justice is so strong, and stern, and inflexible, that from his presence he must drive out his dearest child if one single sin should remain unforgiven. Who then amongst us can tell the guilt of guilt, the heinousness of that ungrateful rebellion which man has commenced and carried on against his wise and gracious Creator. Sin, like hell, is a bottomless pit! Oh, brethren, there never lived a man yet who really knew how guilty he was; for if such a being could be fully conscious of all his own guilt, he would carry hell in his bowels. Nay, I often think that scarcely can the damned in perdition know all the guilt of their iniquity, or else even their furnace might be heated seven times hotter, and Tophet's streams must be enlarged to an unmeasurable depth. The hell which is contained in a single evil thought is unutterable and unimaginable. God only knows the blackness, the horror of darkness, which is condensed into the thought of evil.

And then again, I think our text would convey to us this idea. Who can understand the peculiar aggravation of his own transgression. Now, answering the question for myself, I feel that as a minister of Christ I cannot understand my errors. Placed where multitudes listen to the Word from my lips, my responsibilities are so tremendous, that the moment I think of them, a mountain presses upon my soul. There have been times, when I have wished to imitate Jonah and take ship and flee away from the work which God has thrust upon me; for I am conscious

that I have not served him as I ought. When I have preached most earnestly, I go to my chamber and repent that I have preached in so heartless a manner. When I have wept over your souls, and when I have agonized in prayer, I have yet been conscious that I have not wrestled with God as I ought to have wrestled, and that I have not felt for your souls as I ought to feel. The errors which a man may commit in the ministry are incalculable. There is no hell methinks that shall be hot enough for the man who is unfaithful here. There can be no curse too horrible to be hurled upon the head of that man who leads others astray when he ought to guide them in the path of peace, or who deals with sacred things as if they were matters of no weight, and but of slight importance. I bring here any minister of Christ that lives, and if he be a man really filled with the Holy Spirit, he will tell you that when he is bowed down with the solemnity of his of office, he would give up the work if he dare; that if it were not for something beyond, mysterious impulses that drive him forward, he would take his hand from the plough and leave the field of battle. Lord have mercy upon thy ministers, for, beyond all other men, we need mercy.

And now I single out any other member of my congregation, and whatever be your position in life, whatever your education, or the peculiar providences through which you have passed, I will insist upon it that there is something special about your case which makes your sin such sin, that you cannot understand how vile it is. Perhaps you have had a pious mother who wept over you in your childhood, and dedicated you to God when you were in your cradle. Your sin is doubly sin. There is about it a scarlet hue which is not to be discovered in an ordinary criminal. You have been directed from your youth up in the way of righteousness, and if you have gone astray, every step you have taken has been not a step to hell but a stride thither. You do not sin so

cheaply as others. Other men's scores run up fast; but where there are pence put down for other sinners there are pounds put down for you, because you know your duty but you do it not. He that breaks through a mother's bosom to hell goes to its lowest depths. There is in hell a degree of torture, and the deepest should surely be reserved for the man who leaps over a mother's prayers into perdition. Or you may never have this to account for; but you may have an equal aggravation. You have been at sea, sir. Many times you have been in danger of being shipwrecked. You have had miraculous escapes. Now every one of these shipwrecks has been a warning to you. God has brought you to the gates of death, and you have promised that if he would but save your wretched soul that you would lead a fresh life--that you would begin to serve your Maker. You have lied to your God. Your sins before you uttered that vow were evil enough; but now you break not only the law but your own covenant which you voluntarily made with God in the home of sickness. You have, some of you perhaps, been thrown from a horse, or have been attacked by fever, or in other ways have been brought to the very gates of the grave. What solemnity is attached to your life now! He that rode in the charge of Balaklava and yet came back alive--saved alive where hundreds die--should from that time consider himself to be a God's man, saved by a singular Providence for singular ends. But you too have had your escapes, if not quite so wonderful, yet certainly quite as special instances of God's goodness. And now, every error you commit becomes unutterably wicked, and of you I may say, "Who can understand his errors?"

But I might exhaust the congregation by bringing up one by one. Here comes the father. Sir, your sins will be imitated by your children. You cannot therefore understand your errors, because they are sins against your own offspring--sins against the children that have sprung from

your own loins. Here is the magistrate. Sir, your sins are of a peculiar dye, because, standing in your position, your character is watched and looked up to, and whatever you do becomes the excuse of other men. I bring up another man who holds no office in the state whatever, and who perhaps is little known among men. But, sir, you have received special grace from God, you have had rich enjoyment of the light of your Savior's countenance; you have been poor, but he has made you rich--rich in faith. Now when you rebel against him, the sins of God's favourites are sins indeed. Iniquities committed by the people of God become as huge as high Olympus, and reach the very stars. Who among us, then, can understand his errors: their special aggravations, their number, and their guilty Lord, search thou us and know our ways!

II. I have thus tried briefly to explain my text; now I come to THE IMPRESSING OF IT ON THE HEART, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me. Before a man could understand his errors there are several mysteries which he must know. But each one of these mysteries, methinks, is beyond his knowledge, and consequently the understanding of the whole depth of the guilt of his sin must be quite beyond human power. Now the first mystery that man must understand is the fall. Until I know how much all my powers are debased and depraved, how thoroughly my will is perverted and my judgment turned from its right channel, how really and essentially vicious my nature has become, it cannot be possible for me to know the whole extent of my guilt. Here is a piece of iron laid upon the anvil. The hammers are plied upon it lustily. A thousand sparks are scattered on every side. Suppose it possible to count each spark as it falls from the anvil; yet who could guess the number of the unborn sparks that still lie latent and hidden in the mass of iron? Now, brethren, your sinful nature may be compared to that heated bar of iron. Temptations are the hammers; your sins the sparks. If you could

count them (which you cannot do) yet who could tell the multitude of unborn iniquities--eggs of sin that lie slumbering in your souls? Yet must you know this before you know the whole sinfulness of your nature. Our open sins are like the farmer's little sample which he brings to market. There are granaries full at home. The iniquities that we see are like the weeds upon the surface soil; but I have been told, and indeed have seen the truth of it, that if you dig six feet into the earth, and turn up fresh soil, there will be found in that soil six feet deep the seeds of the weeds indigenous to the land. And so we are not to think merely of the sins that grow on the surface, but if we could turn our heart up to its core and center, we should find it as fully permeated with sin as every piece of putridity is with worms and rottenness. The fact is, that man is a reeking mass of corruption. His whole soul is by nature so debased and so depraved, that no description which can be given of him even by inspired tongues can fully tell how base and vile a thing he is. An ancient writer said once of the iniquity within, that it was like the stores of water which it is are hidden in the depths of the earth. God once broke up the fountains of the great deep, and then they covered the mountains twenty cubits upward. If God should even withdraw his restraining grace, and break up in our hearts the whole fountains of the great depths of our iniquity, it would be a flood so wondrous, that it would cover the highest tops of our hopes and the whole worm within us would be drowned in dread despair. Not a living thing could be found in this sea of evil. It would cover all, and swallow up the whole of our manhood. Ah! says an old proverb, "If man could wear his sins on his forehead, he would pull his hat over his eyes. That old Roman who said he would like to have a window into his heart that every man could see within it, did not know himself, for if he had had such a window he would soon have begged to

have a pair of shutters, and he would have kept them shut up I am sure; for could he ever have seen his own heart, he would have been driven raving mad. God, therefore, spares all eyes but his own that desperate sight--a naked human heart. Great God, here would we pause and cry, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shaft make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

A second thing which it will be needful for us to understand before we can comprehend our errors is God's law. If I just describe the law for a moment, you will very readily see that you can never hope by any means fully to understand it. The law of God, as we read it in the ten great commandments, seems very simple, very easy. When we come, however, to put even its naked precepts into practice, we find that it is quite impossible for us to keep them in the full. Our amazement, however, increases, when we find that the law does not mean merely what it says, but that it has a spiritual meaning, a hidden depth of matter which at first sight we do not discover. For instance, the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," means more than the mere act--refers to fornication and uncleanness of any shape, both in act, and word, and thought. Nay, to use our Savior's own exposition of it, "He that looketh upon a woman to lust after her, committeth adultery already with her in his heart." So with every commandment. The bare letter is nothing, compared with the whole stupendous meaning and severe strictness of the rule. The commandments, if I may so speak, are like the stars. When seen with the naked eye, they appear to be brilliant points; if we could draw near to them, we should see them to be infinite worlds, greater than even our sun, stupendous though it is. So is it with the law of God. It seems to be but a luminous point, because

we see it at a distance, but when we come nearer where Christ stood, and estimate the lair as he saw it, then we find it is vast, immeasurable. "The commandment is exceeding broad." Think then for a moment of the spirituality of the law, its extent and strictness. The law of Moses condemns for offense, without hope of pardon, and sin, like a millstone, is bound around the sinner's neck, and he is cast into the depths. Nay, the law deals with sins of thought,--the imagination of evil is sin. The transit of sin across the heart, leaves the stain of impurity behind it. This law, too, extends to every act,--tracks us to our bed-chamber, goes with us to our house of prayer, and if it discovers so much as the least sign of wavering from the strict path of integrity, it condemns us. When we think of the law of God we may well be overwhelmed with horror, and sit down and say, "God be merciful to me, for to keep this law is utterly beyond power; even to know the fullness of its meaning is not within finite capacity. Therefore great God cleanse us from our secret faults--save us by thy grace, for by the law we never can be saved."

Nor yet, even if you should know these two things, should you be able to answer this question; for, to comprehend our own errors, we must be able to understand the perfection of God. To get a full idea of how black sin is, you must know how bright God is. We see things by contrast. You will at one time have pointed out to you a color which appears perfectly white; yet it is possible for something to be whiter still; and when you think you have arrived at the very perfection of whiteness, you discover that there is still a shade, and that something may be found that is blanched to a higher state of purity. When we put ourselves in comparison with the apostles, we discover that we are not what we should be; but if we could bring ourselves side by side with the purity of God, O what spots! what defilements should we find on our

surface! while the Immaculate God stands before us as the bright back-ground to set out the blackness of our iniquitous souls. Ere thou canst know thine own defilement those eyes must look into the unutterable glory of the divine character. Him before whom the heavens are not pure--who chargeth the angels with folly--thou must know him before thou canst know thyself. Hope not, then, that thou shalt ever attain to a perfect knowledge of the depths of thine own sin.

Again: he that would understand his errors in all their heinousness must know the mystery of hell. We must walk that burning marl, stand in the midst of the blazing flame; nay, feel it. We must feel the venom of destruction as it makes the blood boil in each vein. We must find our nerves converted into fiery roads, along which the hot feet of pain shall travel, hurrying with lightning pace. We must know the extent of eternity, and then the unutterable agony of that eternal wrath of God which abides on the souls of the lost, before we can know the awful character of sin. You may best measure the sin by the punishment. Depend upon it, God will not put his creatures to a single pang more pain than justice absolutely demands. There is no such thing as sovereign torture or sovereign hell. God does not stretch his creature on the rack like a tyrant; he will give him but what he deserves, and, perhaps, even when God's wrath is fiercest against sin, he does not punish the sinner so much as his sin might warrant, but only as much as it demands. At any rate, there will not be a grain more of wormwood in the cup of the lost than naked justice absolutely requires. Then, O my God! if thy creatures are to be cast into a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone--if into a pit that is bottomless lost souls must be driven, then what a hideous thing sin must be. I cannot understand that torture, therefore I cannot understand the guilt that deserves it. Yet am I conscious that my guilt deserves it, or else God would not have

threatened me with it, for he is just and I am unjust; he is holy and righteous, and good, and he would not punish me more for my sin than my sin absolutely required.

Yet once more--a last endeavor to impress this question of my text upon our hearts. George Herbert saith very sweetly:--"He that would know sin let him repair to Olivet, and he shall see a man so wrung with pain that all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be. Sin was that press and vice which forced pain to hunt its cruel food through every vein." You must see Christ sweating as it were great drops of blood; you must have a vision of him with the spittle running down his cheeks, with his back torn by the accursed whip; you must see him going on his dolorous journey through Jerusalem; you must behold him fainting under the weight of the cross; you must see him as the nails are driven through his hands and through his feet; your tearful eye must watch the throes of the grim agonies of death; you must drink of the bitterness of wormwood mingled with the gall; you must stand in the thick darkness with your own soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death; you must cry yourself that awful earth-startling cry of "Lama sabachthani;" you too must, as he did, feel all that weighs of God's almighty wrath; you must be ground between the upper and nether millstones of wrath and vengeance; you must drink of the cup to its last dregs, and like Jesus cry--"It is finished;" or else you can never know all your errors, and understand the guilt of your sin. But this is clearly impossible and undesirable. Who wishes to suffer as the Savior suffered, all the horrors which he endured? He, blessed be his name, has suffered for us. The cup is emptied now. The cross stands up no longer for us to die thereon. Quenched is the flame of hell for every true believer. Now no more is God angry with his people, for he has put away sin through the sacrifice of himself. Yet I say it again, before we could know sin we

must know the whole of that awful wrath of God which Jesus Christ endured. Who, then, can understand his errors?

III. I hope to have your patient attention but a few moments longer while I make THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION, by touching upon the lessons which are drawn from such a subject as this.

The first lesson is--Behold then the folly of all hope of salvation by our own righteousness. Come hither, ye that trust in yourselves. Look to Sinai, altogether in a smoke, and tremble and despair. You say that you have good works. Alas your good works are evil, but have you no evil ones? Do you deny that you have ever sinned? Ah! my hearer, art thou so besotted as to declare that thy thoughts have all been chaste, thy desires all heavenly, and thine actions all pure? Oh, man, it all this were true, if thou hadst no sins of commission, yet, what about thy sins of omission? Hast thou done all that God and that thy brother could require of thee? Oh these sins of omission! The hungry that you have not fed, the naked that you have not clothed, the sick ones, and those that are in prison that you have not visited--remember it was for sins like these that the goats were found at the left hand at last. Not for what they did do, but for what they did not do--the things they left undone, these men were put into the lake of fire. Oh, my hearer, have done with thy boasting; pull out those plumes from thine helmet thou rebellious one, and come with thy glory draggling in the mire, and with thy bright garment stained, and now confess that thou hast no righteousness of thine own--that thou art all unclean, and full of sin.

If but this one practical lesson were learned, it were sufficient to repay this morning's gathering, and a blessing would be conveyed to every spirit that had learned it. But now we come to another--how vain are all hopes of salvation by our feelings. We have a new legalism to fight with in our Christian churches. There are men and women who think

they must not believe on Christ till they feel their sins up to a most agonizing point. They think they must feel a certain degree of sorrow, a high degree of sense of need before they may come to Christ at all. Ah! soul, if thou art never saved till thou knowest all thy guilt, thou wilt never be saved, for thou canst never know it. I have shown thee the utter impossibility of thy ever being able to discover the whole heights and depths of thine own lost state. Man, don't try to be saved by thy feelings. Come and take Christ just as he is, and come to him just as thou art. "But, Sir, may I come? I am not invited to come." Yes you are, "Whosoever will, let him come." Don't believe that the invitations of the gospel are given only to characters; they are, some of them, unlimited invitations. It is the duty of every man to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is every man's solemn duty to trust Christ, not because of anything that man is, or is not, but because he is commanded to do it. "This is the command of God, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he has sent."

"O, believe the promise true,
God to you his Son has given."

Trust now in his precious blood, you are saved, and you shall see his face in heaven. Despair of being saved by feeling, since perfect feelings are impossible and a perfect knowledge of our own guilt is quite beyond our reach. Come, then to Christ, hard-hearted as thou art, and take him to be the Savior of thy hard heart. Come, poor stony conscience, poor icy soul, come as thou art; he will warm thee, he will melt thee.

"True belief, and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

But again. Another sweet inference--and surely this might well be the last--is this: what grace is this which pardons sin?--sin so great that the most enlarged capacity cannot comprehend its heinousness. Oh! I know my sins reach from the east even to the west--that aiming at the eternal skies they rise like pointed mountains towards hearer. But then, blessed be the name of God, the blood of Christ is wider than my sin. That shoreless flood of Jesus' merit is deeper than the heights of mine iniquities. My sin may be great, but his merit is greater still I cannot conceive my own guilt, much less express it, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Infinite guilt, but infinite pardon. Boundless iniquities, but boundless merits to cover all. What if thy sins were greater than heaven's breadth, yet Christ is greater than heaven. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him. If thy sins were deeper than the bottomless hell, yet Christ's atonement is deeper still, for he descended deeper than ever man himself as yet hath dived--even damned men in all the horror of their agony, for Christ went to the end of punishment, and deeper thy sins can never plunge. Oh! boundless love, that covers all my faults. My poor hearer, believe on Christ now. God help thee to believe. May the Spirit now enable thee to trust in Jesus. Thou canst not save thyself. All hopes of self-salvation are delusive. Now give up, have done with self, and take Christ. Just as thou art, drop into his arms. He will take thee; he will save thee. He died to do it, and he lives to accomplish it. He will not lose the spirit that casts itself into his hands and makes him his all in all.

I think I must not detain you longer. The subject is one which might command far larger mind than mine, and better words than I can gather now, but if it has struck home I am thankful to God. Let me echo again and again the one sentiment I wish for all to receive, which is just

this. We are so vile that our vileness is beyond our own comprehension, but nevertheless, the blood of Christ hath infinite efficacy, and he that believeth in the Lord Jesus is saved, be his sins ever so many, but he that believeth not must be lost, be his sins never so few.
God bless you all for Christ's sake.

Chapter 13

Spiritual Peace

A Sermon

(No. 300)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 19th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."--John 14:27.

OUR LORD WAS now about to die, to depart from this world, and to ascend to his Father; he therefore makes his will; and this is the blessed legacy which he leaves to the faithful--"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

We may rest well assured that this testament of our Lord Jesus Christ is valid. You have here his own signature; it is signed, sealed, and delivered in the presence of the eleven apostles, who are faithful and true witnesses. Tis true a testament is not in force while the testator liveth, but Jesus Christ has died once for all; and now none can dispute his legacy. The will is in force, because the testator has died. It may however, sometimes happen that a testator's wishes in a will may be disregarded, and he, powerless beneath the sod, is quite unable to rise and demand that his last will should be carried out. But our Lord Jesus Christ who died, and therefore made his will valid rose again, and now he lives to see every stipulation of it carried out; and this blessed codicil, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," is sure to all the blood-bought seed. Peace is theirs, and must be theirs, because he died and put the will in force, and lives to see the will fulfilled.

The donation, the blessed legacy which our Lord has here left, is his

peace. This might be considered as being peace with all the creatures. God has mace a league of peace between his people and the whole universe. "For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee." "All things work together for good to them that love God." Providence that was once estranged, and seemed to work counter to our welfare, has now become at peace with us. The wheels revolve in happy order, and bear us blessings as often as they turn. The words of our Lord may also refer to the peace which exists among the people of God toward one another. There is a peace of God which reigns in our hearts through Jesus Christ, by which we are bound in closest ties of unity and concord to every other child of God whom we may meet with in our pilgrimage here below. Leaving, however, these two sorts of peace, which I believe to be comprehended in the legacy, let us proceed to consider two kinds of peace, which in our experience resolve themselves into one, and which are surely the richest part of this benediction. Our Savior here means peace with God, and peace with our own conscience. There is first, peace with God for he "hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;" he hath put away the wall which separated us from Jehovah, and now there is "peace on earth" and "goodwill toward men." When sin is put away, God has no cause of warfare against his creature: Christ has put our sins away, and therefore there is a virtual substantial peace established between God and our souls. This, however, might exist without our clearly understanding and rejoicing in it. Christ has therefore left us peace in the conscience. Peace with God is the treaty; peace in the conscience is the publication of it. Peace with God is the fountain, and peace with conscience is the crystal stream which issues from it. There is a peace decreed in the court of divine justice in heaven; and then there follows as a necessary consequence.

As soon as the news is known, a peace in the minor court of human judgment wherein conscience sits upon the throne to judge us according to our works.

The legacy, then, of Christ is a twofold peace: a peace of friendship, of agreement, of love, of everlasting union between the elect and God. It is next a peace at sweet enjoyment, of quiet rest of the understanding and the conscience. When there are no winds above, there will be no tempests below. When heaven is serene earth is quiet. Conscience reflects the complacency of God. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement."

I propose this morning, if God the Holy Spirit shall graciously assist, to speak of this peace thus:--first, its secret ground-work; then its noble nature; thirdly, its blessed effects; fourthly, its interruptions and means of maintenance; and then I shall close by some words of solemn warning to those of you who have never enjoyed peace with God, and consequently never have had true peace with yourselves.

I. First, then, THE PEACE WHICH A TRUE CHRISTIAN ENJOYS WITH GOD AND HIS CONSCIENCE HAS A SOLID GROUND-WORK TO REST UPON. It is not built upon a pleasing fiction of his imagination, a delusive dream of his ignorance; but it is built on facts, on positive truths, on essential verities; it is founded upon a rock, and though the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods beat upon that house, it shall not fall, because its foundation is secure. When a man hath faith in the blood of Christ there is but little wonder that he hath peace, for indeed he is fully warranted in enjoying the most profound calm which mortal heart can know. For thus he reasons with himself:--God hath said, "He that believeth is justified from all things." and, moreover, that "he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." Now, my faith is

unfeignedly fixed in the great substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, therefore I am now justified from all things, and stand accepted in Christ as a believer. The necessary consequence of that is, that he possesses peace of mind. If God has punished Christ in my stead, he will not punish me again. "Being once purged I have no more conscience of sin." Under the Jewish ceremonial, mention was made of sin every year; the atoning lamb must be slaughtered a thousand times, but "this man, having made one atonement for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens." How, I ask, can the man tremble who believes himself forgiven? It were strange indeed if his faith did not breathe a holy calm into his bosom.

Again, the child of God receives his peace from another golden pipe, for a sense of pardon has been shed abroad in his soul. He not only believes his forgiveness from the testimony of God, but he has a sense of pardon. Do any of you know what this is? It is something more than a belief in Christ; it is the cream of faith, the full ripe fruit of believing, it is a high and special privilege which God gives after faith. If I have not that sense of pardon I am still bound to believe, and then, believing, I shall by and by advance to the seeing of that which I believed and hoped for. The Holy Spirit sometimes sheds abroad in the believer a consciousness that he is forgiven. By mysterious agency he fills the soul with the light of glory. If all the false witnesses on earth should rise up and tell the man at that time that God is not reconciled to him, and that his sins remain unforgiven, he would be able to laugh them to scorn; for saith he, "the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit." He feels that he is reconciled to God. He has come from faith up to enjoyment, and every power of his soul feels the divine dew as it gently distils from heaven. The understanding feels it, it is enlightened; the will feels

it, it is subjected to the will of God; the heart feels it, it is fired with holy love; the hope feels it, for it looks forward to the day when the whole man shall be made like its covenant head Jesus Christ. Every flower in the garden of humanity feels the sweet south wind of the Spirit, as it blows upon it, and causes the sweet spices to send forth their perfume. What wonder, then, that man has peace with God when the Holy Ghost becomes a royal tenant of the heart, with all his glorious train of blessings? Ah! poor tried soul, what peace and joy unspeakable would reign in your soul if you did but believe on Christ? "Yes," say you, "but I want God to manifest to me that I am forgiven." Poor soul, he will not do that at once; he bids you believe Christ first, and then he will make manifest to you the pardon of your sin. It is by faith we are saved, not by enjoyment; but when I believe Christ, and take him at his word, even when my feelings seem to contradict my faith, then, as a gracious reward, he will honor my faith by giving me to feel that which I once believed when I did not feel it.

The believer also enjoys, in favored seasons, such an intimacy with the Ford Jesus Christ, that he cannot but be at peace. Oh! there are sweet words which Christ whispers in the ears of his people, and there are love-visits which he pays to them, which a man would not believe even though it should be told unto him. Ye must know for yourselves what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. There is such a thing as Christ manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world. All black and frightful thoughts are banished. "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." This is the one all-absorbing feeling of the spirit. And what wonder is it, that the believer has peace when Christ thus dwells in his heart, and reigns there without a rival, so that he knows no man, save Jesus only. It were a miracle of miracles if we did not have peace; and the strangest thing in Christian

experience is that our peace is not more continued, and the only explanation of our misery is, that our communion is broken, that our fellowship is marred, else would our peace be like a river, and our righteousness like the waves of the sea.

That venerable man of God, Joseph Irons, who but a little while ago ascended to our Father in heaven, says, "What wonder that a Christian man has peace when he carries the title-deeds of heaven in his bosom!" This is another solid groundwork of confidence. We know that heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and the Christian can sometimes cry with the apostles, "Thanks be unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Feeling that God has given him the meetness; he discovers that this preparation is a warrant for the hope that he shall enter into the dwelling-place of the glorified. He can lift his eye above, and say, "Yon bright world is mine, my entailed inheritance; life keeps me from it, but death shall bring me to it; my sins cannot destroy the heaven-written indentures, heaven is mine; Satan himself cannot shut me out of it. I must, I shall be where Jesus is, for after him my spirit longs, and to him my soul is knit." Oh, brethren, it is not a marvel when all is blest within, and all is calm above, that justified men possess "a peace with God which passeth all understanding."

You will perhaps be saying, well, but the Christian has troubles like other men--losses in business, deaths in his family, and sickness of body! Yes, but he has another groundwork for his peace--an assurance of the faithfulness and covenant fidelity of his God and Father. He believes that God is a faithful God--that whom he hath loved he will not cast away. All the dark providences to him are but blessings in disguise. When his cup is bitter, he believes it is mixed by love, and it must all end well, for God secures the ultimate result. Therefore

come foul, come fair, come all weathers, his soul shelters itself beneath the twin wings of the faithfulness and power of his Covenant God. The sanctified spirit is so resigned to his Father's will that he will not murmur. To him, as Madame Guyon was wont to say,--"It is equal whether love ordain his life or death, appoint him weal or woe." He is content to take just what his Father sends him, knowing that his Father understands him better than he understands himself: He gives up the helm of his ship to the hand of a gracious God; and he, himself; is enabled to fall asleep softly in the cabin, he believes that his Captain hath power over winds and waves; and when he sometimes feels his ship rocking in the storm, he cries with Herbert--

"Though winds and waves assault my keel,
He doth preserve it; he doth steer,
Even when the bark seems most to reel.
Storms are the triumph of his art;
Sure he may hide his face, but not his heart."

No wonder, then, that he has peace, when he can feel this, and knows that he who hath begun the good work, has both the will and the power to perfect it, unto the day of Christ.

II. Having hurriedly unveiled the secret groundwork of the Christian's peace, we must dwell for a few minutes upon ITS NOBLE CHARACTER. The peace of other men is ignoble and base. Their peace is born in the purlieus of sin. Self-conceit and ignorance are its parents. The man knows not what he is and therefore thinks himself to be something--when he is nothing. He says--"I am rich and increased in goods," while he is naked, and poor, and miserable. Not such is the birth of the Christian's peace. That is born of the Spirit. It is a peace which God the Father gives, for he is the God of all peace; it is a peace which Jesus Christ bought, for he has made peace with his blood, and he is

our peace; and it is a peace which the Holy Spirit works--be is its author and its founder in the soul.

Our peace then, is God's own child, and God-like is its character. His Spirit is its sire, and it is like its Father. It is "my peace," saith Christ! not man's peace; but the unruffled, calm, the profound peace of the Eternal Son of God. Oh, if we had but this one thing within our bosoms, this divine peace, a Christian were a glorious thing indeed; and even now kings and mighty men of this world are as nothing when once compared with the Christian; for he wears a jewel in his bosom which all the world could not buy, a jewel fashioned from old eternity and ordained by sovereign grace to be the high boon, the right royal inheritance of the chosen sons of God.

This peace, then, is divine in its origin; and it is also divine in its nourishment. It is a peace which the world cannot give; and it cannot contribute towards its maintenance. The daintiest morsels that ever carnal sense fed upon, would be bitter to the mouth of this sweet peace. Ye may bring your much fine corn, your sweet wine and your flowing oil, your dainties tempt us not, for this peace feeds upon angels food, and it cannot relish any food that groweth earth. If you should give a Christian ten times as much riches as he has, you would not cause him ten times as much peace; but probably, ten times more distress; you might magnify him in honor, or strengthen him with health; yet, neither would his honor or his health contribute to his peace, for that peace flows from a divine source; and there are no tributary streams from the hills of earth to feed that divine current; the stream flows from the throne of God, and by God alone is it sustained.

It is, then, a peace divinely born and divinely nourished. And let me again remark, it is a peace that lives above circumstances. The world

has tried hard to put an end to the Christian's peace, and it has never been able to accomplish it. I remember, in my early childhood, having heard an old man utter in prayer, a saying which stuck by me--"O Lord, give unto thy servants that peace which the world can neither give nor take away." Ah! the whole might of our enemies cannot take it away. Poverty cannot destroy it, the Christian in his rags can have peace with God. Sickness cannot mar it; lying on his bed, the saint is joyful in the midst of the fires. Persecution cannot ruin it, for persecution cannot separate the believer from Christ, and while he is one with Christ his soul is full of peace. "Put your hand here," said the martyr to his executioner, when he was led to the stake, "put your hand here, and now put your hand on your own heart, and feel which beats the hardest, and which is the most troubled." Strangely was the executioner struck with awe, when he found the Christian man as calm as though he were going to a wedding feast, while he himself has all agitation at having to perform so desperate a deed. Oh, world! we defy thee to rob us of our peace. We did not get it of thee, and thou canst not rend it from us. It is set as a seal upon our arm; it is strong as death and invincible as the grave. Thy stream, O Jordan, cannot drown it, black and deep though thy depths may be; in the midst of thy tremendous billows our soul is confident, and resteth still on him that loved us, and gave himself for us. Frequently have I had to remark, that Christians placed in the most unfavourable circumstances are, as a rule, better Christians than those who are placed in propitious positions. In the midst of a very large church of persons in all ranks, with the condition of most of whom I am as thoroughly conversant as man can well be, I have observed that the women who come from houses where they have ungodly husbands, and trying children--that the young people who come from workshops where they are opposed and laughed at--that the

people who come from the depths of poverty, from the dens and kens of our city, are the brightest jewels that are set in the crown of the church. It seems as if God would defeat nature--not only make the hyssop grow on the wall, but make the cedar grow there too--he finds his brightest pearls in the darkest waters, and bring up his most precious jewels from the filthiest dung hills.

"Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat his mercies in your song."

And this I have found too, that often the more disturbed a Christian man is, the purer is his peace, the heavier the rolling swell his griefs and sorrow, the more still, and calm, and profound is the peace that reigns within his heart. So then, it is peace divinely born, divinely nourished, and one which is quite above the influence of this poor whirling world.

Further, I must remark briefly upon the nature of this peace, that it is profound and real. "The peace of God," saith an apostle, "that passeth all understanding." This peace not only fills all the senses to the brim, till every power is satiated with delight, but the understanding which can take in the whole world, and understand many things which are not within the range of vision, even the understanding cannot take in the length and the breadth of this peace. And not only will the understanding fail to compass it, but all understanding is outdone. When our judgment hath exerted itself to the utmost, it cannot comprehend the heights and depths of this profound peace. Have you ever imagined what must be the stillness of the caverns in the depth of the seas, a thousand fathoms beneath the bosom of the floods, where the mariners' bones lie undisturbed, where pearls are born, and corals that never see the light, where the long lost gold and silver of the merchants lie sprinkled on the sandy floor--down in the rock caves, and

the silent palaces of darkness where waves dash not, and the intruding foot of the diver hath never trodden? So clear, so calm is the peace of God, the placid rest of the assured believer. Or lift up your eyes to the stars. Have you never dreamed a sweet dream of the quietude of those noiseless orbs? Let us mount beyond the realm of noise and riot, let us tread the noiseless highway of the silent orbs. The thunders are far below us, the confused tumult of the crowd defiles not the sanctity of this wondrous quiet. See how the stars sleep on their golden couches, or only open their bright eyes to keep watch upon that stormless sea of ether, and guard the solemn boundaries of the reign of peace. Such is the peace and calm that reigns in the Christian's bosom. "Sweet calm," one calls it; perfect peace," David styles it; another one calls it "great peace." "Great peace have all they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Last year--I tell you now a secret of my own heart--I had one text which thrust itself upon my recollection many times a day I dreamed of it when I slept; when I awoke it went with me, and I verified it, and rejoiced in it: "His soul shall dwell at ease." It is my promise now. There is such an ease--quite consistent with labor, with agony for the souls of men, with an earnest desire for yet greater attainments in divine life; there is such an ease--it is not to be gained by all the appliances of luxury, by all the aggrandisement of wealth--an ease in which "not a wave of trouble rolls across the peaceful breast," but all is calm, and all is clear, and all is joy and love. May we evermore dwell in that serene atmosphere, and never lose our hold of this peace.

Lest there should be any of you who do not understand what I have said, I will try and say it over again briefly in an example. Do you see that man? He has been taken up before a cruel tribunal; he is condemned to die. The hour draws nigh: he is taken to prison, and placed there with

two soldiers to guard him, and four quarternions of soldiers outside the door. The night comes on: he lies down, but in how uncomfortable a position! Chained between two soldiers! He lies down and he falls asleep--not the sleep of the guilty criminal, whose very sense of dread makes his eyelids heavy; but a calm sleep which is given by God, and which ends in an angelic vision, by which he is delivered. Peter sleeps, when the death sentence is above his head, and the sword is ready to penetrate his soul. See you another picture? There are Paul and Silas yonder: they have been preaching, and their feet are thrust in the stocks for it. They will die on the morrow; but in the midnight they sing praises unto God, and the prisoners hear them. One would have thought in such a loathsome dungeon as that, they would have groaned and moaned all night long, or that at best they might have slept; but no, they sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them. There is the peace--the calm, the quietude of the heir of heaven. I might give you another picture--of our ancient Nonconformists, in the days of that most persecuting Queen Elizabeth. She cast into prison among very many others, two of our forefathers, of the name of Greenwood and Barrow. They were caused to lie in that loathsome stinking dungeon--the Clink Prison--shut in one huge room with maniacs, murderers, felons, and the like, compelled to listen to their frightful conversation. One day there came a warrant, that they must die. The two men were led out, and tied to the cart, and were about to be taken away to death; but they were no sooner outside the gate than a messenger rode up. The Queen had sent a reprieve. They were taken back; calmly and quietly they returned to their prison; and the next day they were taken to Newgate, and, just as suddenly, there come a second messenger, to say they must be taken away to Tyburn to die. They were again tied to the cart; they ascended the scaffold, the ropes were put round their necks, and they were

allowed to stand in that position end address the assembled multitude, and bear witness to the liberty of Christ's church, and to the right of private judgment among men. They concluded their speech, and a second time that wretched Queen sent them a reprieve, and they were taken back a second time to the dungeon, and there they lay in New gate, but only for few days more, and then a third time they were taken out, and this time they were hanged in reality; but they went as cheerfully to the scaffold on each occasion as men go to their beds, and seemed as joyous, as though they were going to a crown, rather than to a halter. Such specimens all the churches of Christ can show. Wherever there has been a true Christian, the world has tried its best to put out his peace; but it is a peace that never can be quenched--it will live on, what halter about its neck with the hot pincers tearing away its flesh, with the sword in its very bones; it will live, till, mounting from the burning bush of earth, this bird of paradise shall wear its glittering plumage in the midst of the garden of paradise.

III. Having detained you longer on this point than I thought I should do, I hasten to the third point, THE EFFECTS OF THIS DIVINE PEACE. The blessed effects of this divine peace are, first of all, joy. You will notice that the words "joy," and "peace" are continually put together; for joy without peace were an unhallowed and an unhappy joy--the crackling of thorns under a pot, unsound, mere flames of joy, but not the red glowing coals of bliss. Now, divine peace gives joy to the Christian; and such joy! Have you ever seen the first gleam of joy when it has come into the eve of the penitent? It has been my happy lot to pray with many a convinced sinner, to witness the deep agony of spirit, an l deeply to sympathise with the poor creature in his trouble for sin. I have prayed and have exhorted to faith, and I have seen that flash of joy, when at last the hopeful word was spoken "I do believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart." Oh! that look of joy! It is as if the gates of heaven had been opened for a moment, and some flash of glory had blazed upon the eye and had been reflected therefrom I remember my own joy, when I first had peace with God. I thought I could dance all the way home I could understand what John Bunyan said, when he declared he wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land all about it. He was too full to hold, he felt he must tell some one. Oh! there was joy in the household that day, when all heard that the eldest son had found a Savior and knew himself to be forgiven--bliss compared with which all earth's joys are less than nothing and vanity. As the counterfeit to the real coin, so are the base joys of earth to the real joy which springs from peace with God. Young man! Young woman! if you could have at bliss such as you never knew before, you must be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ; for till then, real joy and lasting pleasure you can never know.

The first effect of this peace, then, is joy. Taken follows another--love. He that is at peace with God through the blood of Christ is constrained to love him that died for him. "Precious Jesus!" he cries, "help me to serve thee! Take me as I am, and make me for something. Use me in thy cause; send me to the farthest part of the green earth, if thou wilt, to tell to sinners the way of salvation; I will cheerfully go, for my peace fans the flame of love, that all that I am and all I have shall be, must be, for ever thine."

Then next, there comes an anxiety after holiness. He that is at peace with God does not wish to go into sin; for he is careful lest he should lose that peace. He is like a woman that has escaped from a burning house; he is afraid of every candle afterwards, lest he should come again into the like danger. He walks humbly with his God. Constrained by grace, this sweet fruit of the Spirit, peace, leads him to endeavor

to keep all the commandments of God, and to serve his Lord with all his might.

Then again, this peace will help us to bear affliction. Paul describes it as a shoe. As he says, "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." It enables us to tread on the sharpest flints of sorrow, yea, on adders, and on serpents also; it gives us power to walk over the briars of this world, and our feet are not wounded; we tread the fires, and we are not burned. This divine shoe of peace makes us walk without weariness, and run without fainting. I can do all things when my soul is at peace with God. There are no sufferings that shall move my soul to pain, no terrors that shall blanch my cheek, there are no wounds that shall compel me to an ignominious fear when my spirit is at peace with God. It makes a man a giant--swells the dwarf to a Goliath size. He becomes mightiest of the mighty; and while the weaklings creep about this little earth, bowed down to the very dust, he strides it like a Colossus. God has made him great and mighty, because he has filled his soul with peace, and with overflowing joy. More might I tell you of the blessed effects of this peace, but I shall be content, after I have simply noticed that this peace gives boldness at the throne, and access to a Father's mercy-seat. We feel we are reconciled, and therefore we stand no longer at a distance, but we come up to him, even to his knees, we spread our wants before him, plead our cause, and rest satisfied of success, because there is no enmity in our Father's heart to us, and none in ours to him. We are one with God, and he is one with us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV. And now I have a practical duty to perform, and with this I shall close after having said a few words to those who know nothing of this peace. The practical remarks I have to make are upon the subject of INTERRUPTIONS OF PEACE.

All Christians have a right to perfect peace, but they have not all the possession of it. There are times when gloomy doubts prevail, and we fear to say that God is ours. We lose a consciousness of pardon, and we grope in the noonday as in the night. How is this? I think these interruptions may be owing to one of four causes.

Sometimes they are due to the ferocious temptations of Satan. There are periods when with unexampled cruelty Satan assaults the children of God. It is not to be expected that they will maintain perfect peace while they are fighting with Apollyon. When poor Christian was wounded in his head, and in his hands, and in his feet, no wonder that he did groan exceedingly, and as Bunyan hath it, "I never saw him all the while give so much as one pleasant look, till he perceive I he had wounded Apollyon with his two-edged sword; then, indeed, he did smile and look upward; but it was the dreadfullest fight that ever I saw." Mark, there is no such thing as a disturbance of the reality of the peace between God and the soul; for God is always at peace with those who are reconciled to him by Christ; but there is a disturbance of the enjoyment of that peace, and that is often effected by the howlings of that great dog of hell. He comes against us with all his might, with his mouth open ready to swallow us up quick, and were it not for divine mercy he would do so. It is but little marvel that sometimes our peace is affected, when Satan is fierce in his temptations.

At another time a want of peace may arise from ignorance. I do not wonder that a man who believes Arminian doctrine, for instance, has little peace. There is nothing in the doctrine to give him any. It is a bone without marrow, it is a religion that seems to me to be cold, sapless, marrowless, fruitless--bitter and not sweet. There is nothing about it but the whip of the law; there are no grand certainties--no glorious facts of covenant love, of discriminating grace, of Almighty

faithfulness, and suretyship engagements. I will never quarrel with the man that can live on such stones and scorpions as conditional election, haphazard redemption, questionable perseverance, and unavailing regeneration. There may be some, I suppose, who can live on this dry meat. If they can live on it, be it so; but I believe many of our doubts and fears arise from doctrinal ignorance. You have not, perhaps, a clear view of that covenant made between the Father and his glorious Son, Jesus Christ; you do not know how to spell the word "gospel" without mixing up the word "law" in it. Perhaps you have not learned fully to look out of self to Christ for everything. You do not know how to distinguish between sanctification, which varies, and justification, which is permanent. Many believers have not come to discern between the work of the Spirit and the work of the Son; and what marvel, if ye are ignorant, that ye sometimes lack peace? Learn more of that precious Book, and your peace shall be more continual.

Then again this peace is usually marred by sin. God hides his face behind the clouds of dust which his own flock make as they travel along the road of this world. We sin, and then we sorrow for it. God still loves his child, even when he sins; but he will not let the child know it. That child's name is in the family register; but the Father clasps up the book, and will not let him read it till he thoroughly repents again, and comes back once more to Jesus Christ. If you can have peace and yet live in sin, mark this, you are unrenewed. If you can live in iniquity, and yet have peace in your conscience, your conscience is seared and dead. But the Christian men, he sins, begins to smart; it not the very moment he falls, it is not long before his Father's rod is on his back, and he begins to cry,

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?

Where is the soul-refreshing view

Of Jesus and his Word?"

Once more: our peace may be interrupted also by unbelief. Indeed, this is the sharpest knife of the four, and will most readily cut the golden thread of our enjoyments.

And now, if ye would maintain unbroken peace, take advice from God's minister this morning, young though he be in years. Take advice, which he can warrant to be good, for it is Scriptural. If ye would keep your peace continual and unbroken, look always to the sacrifice of Christ, never permit your eye to turn to any thing but Jesus. When thou repentest, my hearer, still keep thine eye on the cross; when thou labourest, labor in the strength of the Crucified One. Everything thou doest, whether it be self-examination, lasting, meditation, or prayer, do all under the shadow of Jesus' cross; or otherwise, live as thou wilt, thy peace will be but a sorry thing; thou shalt be full of disquiet and of sore trouble. Live near the cross, and your peace shall be continual.

Another piece of advice. Walk humbly with your God. Peace is a jewel; God puts it on your finger, be proud of it, and he will take it off again, Peace is a noble garment; boast of your dress, and God will take it away from you. Remember the hole of the pit whence you were digged, and the quarry of nature whence you were hewn; and when you have the bright crown of peace on your head, remember your black feet; nay, even when that crown is there, cover it and your face still with those two wings, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. In this way shall your peace be maintained.

And again, walk in boldness, avoid every appearance of evil. "Be not conformed to this world." Stand up for truth and rectitude. Suffer not the maxims of men to sway your judgment. Seek the Holy Spirit that you

may live like Christ, and live near to Christ, and your peace shall not be interrupted.

As for those of you who have never had peace with God, I can entertain but one sentiment towards you, namely, that of pity. Poor souls! poor souls! poor souls! that never knew the peace which Jesus Christ gives to his people. And my pity is all the more needed, because you do not pity yourselves. Ah! souls, the day is coming when that God to whom you are now an enemy, shall stare you in the face. You must see him; and he is "a consuming fire." You must look into that blazing furnace, and sink, and despair; and die. Die, did I say? Worse than that. You must be cast into the pit of damnation, where dying were a boon that can never be granted. Oh! may God give you peace through his Son! If you are now convinced of sin, the exhortation is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Just as thou art, thou art bidden to put thy trust in him that did die upon the tree; and if thou doest this, thy sins shall all be forgiven now, and thou shalt have peace with God; and, ere long, thou shalt know it in thine own conscience and rejoice. Oh! seek this peace and pursue it. and above all, seek the Peace-maker, Christ Jesus, and you shall be saved. God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 14

A Blast of the Trumpet Against False Peace

A Sermon

(No. 301)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, February 26th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Peace, peace, when there is no peace."--Jeremiah 6:14.

MINISTERS ARE FEARFULLY GUILTY if they intentionally build up men in a false peace. I cannot imagine any man more greatly guilty of blood than he who plays jackal to the lion of hell, by pandering to the depraved tastes of vain, rebellious man. The physician who should pamper a man in his disease, who should feed his cancer, or inject continual poison into the system, while at the same time he promised sound health and long life such a physician would not be one half so hideous a monster of cruelty as the professed minister of Christ who should bid his people take comfort, when, instead thereof, he ought to be crying, "Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion: be troubled, ye careless ones." The work of the ministry is no child's play; it is a labor which might fill an angel's hands--did fill the Savior's heart. Much prayer we need that we may be kept honest, and much grace that we may not mislead the souls whom we are bound to guide The pilot who should pretend to steer a ship toward its proper haven, but who should meanwhile occupy himself below with boring holes in her keel that she might sink, would not be a worse traitor than the man who takes the helm of a church, and professes to be steering it towards Christ, while all the while he is ruining it by diluting the truth as it is in Jesus, concealing unpalatable truths, and lulling men into security with soft and flattering words. We might

sooner pardon the assassin who stretches forth his hand under the guise of friendship, and then stabs us to the heart, than we could forgive the man who comes towards us with smooth words, telling us that he is God's ambassador, but all the while foments rebellion in ours hearts, and pacifies us while we are living in revolt against the majesty of heaven. In the great day when Jehovah shall launch his thunderbolts, methinks he will reserve one more dread and terrible than the rest, for some arch-traitor to the cross of Christ, who has not only destroyed himself, but led others into hell.

The motive with these false prophets is an abominable one. Jeremiah tells us it was an evil covetousness. They preached smooth things because the people would have it so, because they thus brought grist to their own mill, and glory to their own names. Their design was abominable, and without doubt, their end shall be desperate--cast away with the refuse of mankind. These who professed to be the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, shall be esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.

But, my dear hearers, it is a lamentable fact, that without any hireling-shepherd to cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," men will cry that for themselves. They need not the syren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter--to think well of their evil estate and foster themselves in proud conceit. No man is ever too severe with himself. We hold the scales of justice with a very unsteady hand when our character is in the balance. We are too ready to say, "I am rich and increased in goods," when at the game time we are naked, and poor, and miserable. Let men alone, let no deluder seek to deceive them, hush for ever every false and tempting voice, they will themselves, impelled by their own

pride; run to an evil conceit, and make themselves at ease, though God himself is in arms against them.

My solemn business this morning shall be, and O may God help me in it, drag forth to the light some of you who have been pacifying your own consciences, and have been crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

It is no uncommon thing with me to meet with people who say, "Well, I am happy enough. My conscience never troubles me. I believe if I were to die I should go to heaven as well as anybody else." I know that those men are living in the commission of glaring acts of sin, and I am sure they could not prove their innocence even before the bar of man; yet will these men look you in the face and tell you that they are not at all disturbed at the prospect of dying. They laugh at death as though it were but a scene in a comedy, and joke at the grave as if they could leap in and out of it at their pleasure. Well, gentlemen, I will take you at your word, though I don't believe you. I will suppose you have this peace, and I will endeavor to account for it on certain grounds which may render it somewhat more difficult for you to remain in it. I do pray that God the Holy Spirit may destroy these foundations, and pull up these bulwarks of yours, and make you feel uneasy in your consciences and troubled in your minds; for unease is the road to ease and disquiet in the soul is the road to the true quiet. To be tormented on account of sin is the path to peace, and happy shall I be if I can hurl a fire-brand into your hearts this morning; if I shall be able, like Samson, to turn at least some little foxes loose into the standing corn of your self-conceit and set your heart in a blaze.

1. The first person I shall have to deal with this morning, is the man who has peace because he spends his life in a ceaseless round of gaiety

and frivolity. You have scarcely come from one place of amusement before you enter another. You are always planning some excursion, and dividing the day between one entertainment and another. You know that you are never happy except you are in what you call gay society, where the frivolous conversation will prevent you from hearing the voice of your conscience. In the morning you will be asleep while God's sun is shining, but at night you will be spending precious time in some place of foolish, if not lascivious mirth. Like Saul, the deserted king, you have an unquiet spirit and therefore you can for music, and it hath its charms, doubtless, charms not only to soothe the stubborn breast, but to still a stubborn conscience for awhile, but while its notes are carrying you upwards towards heaven, in some grand composition of a master author, I beseech you never to forget that your sins are carrying you down to hell. If the harp should fail you, then you call for Nabal's feast. There shall be a sheep shearing, and you shall be drunken with wine, until your souls becomes as stolid as a stone. And then you wonder that you have peace. What wonder! Surely any man would have peace when his heart has become as hard as a stone. What weathers shall it feel? What tempests shall move the stubborn bowels of a granite rock? You sear your consciences, and then marvel that they feel not. Perhaps too, when both wine and the viol fail you, you will call for the dance, and the daughter of Herodias shall please Herod, even though John the Baptist's head should pay its deadly price. Well, well, if you go from one of these scenes to another, I am at no loss to solve the riddle that there should be with you, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

And now sit for your portraits, and I will paint you to the life. A company of idolaters are gathered together around an hideous image. There sits the blood-delighting Moloch. He is heated hot. The fire

blazes in his brazen center, and a child is about to be put into his arms to be burnt to ashes. The mother and father are present when the offspring of their own loins is to be immolated. The little one shrieks with terror; its little body begins to consume in this desperate heat. Will not the parents hear the cry of their own flesh, and listen to the wailings of the fruit of their own bowels? Ah, no, the priests of Moloch will prevent the appeal of nature! Sounding their drums and blowing their trumpets with all their might they drown the cries of this poor immolated victim. It is what you are doing! Your soul is the victim to Satan! It is being destroyed now; and if you would but listen to its cries, if you would give yourself a little quiet, you might hear your poor soul shrieking, "Oh! do not destroy me; put not away from me the hope of mercy; damn me not; send me not down to hell." These are shrieks that might penetrate your spirit, and startle you into wisdom. But no, you beat your drums, and sound your trumpets, and you have your dance and your merriment, that the noise of your poor soul may be hushed. Ah, sirs! there will be a day when you will have to hear your spirit speak. When your cups are empty, and not a drop of water can be given to your burning tongue--when your music has ceased, and the doleful "Miserere" of wailing souls shall be your Black Sanctus,--when you shall be launched for ever into a place where merriment and mirth are strangers--then you will hear the cries of your soul, but hear too late. Then shall each voice be as a dagger sticking in your souls. When your conscience shall, "Remember, thou hadst thy day of mercy; thou hadst thy day of the proclamation of the gospel, but thou didst reject it," then thou wilt wish, but wish in vain, for thunders to come and drown that still small voice, which shall be more terrible in the ears than even the rumbling of the earthquake or the fury of the storm. Oh that ye would be wise and not fritter away your souls for gaiety. Poor

sirs, poor sirs! There are nobler things for souls to do than to kill time--a soul immortal spending all its powers on these frivolities. Well might Young say of it, it resembles ocean into tempest tossed, to waft a feather or to drown a fly. These things are beneath you; they do no honor to you. Oh that you would begin to live! What a price you are paying for your mirth--eternal torment for an hour of jollity--separation from God for a brief day or two of sin! Be wise, men, I beseech you; open your eyes and look about you. Be not for ever madmen. Dance not for ever on this precipice, but stop and think. O Spirit of the loving God! stay thou the frivolous, and dart a burning thought into his soul that will not let him rest until he has tasted the solid joy, the lasting pleasure which none but Zion's children know.

2. Well, now I turn to another class of men. Finding that amusement at last has lost al its zest, having drained the cup of worldly pleasure till they find first satiety, and then disgust lying at the bottom, they want some stronger stimulus, and Satan who has drugged them once, has stronger opiates than mere merriment for the man who chooses to use them. If the frivolity of this world will not suffice to rock a soul to sleep, he hath a yet more hellish cradle for the soul. He will take you up to his own breast, and bid you suck therefrom his own devilish and Satanic nature that you may then be still and calm. I mean that he will lead you to imbibe infidel notions, and when this is fully accomplished, you can have "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." When I hear a man saying, "Well, I am peaceful enough, because I am not fool enough to believe in the existence of a God, or in a world to come, I cannot imagine that this old story book of yours--this Bible--is true," I feel two thoughts within my soul, first, a disgust of the man for his dishonesty, and secondly, a pity for the sad disquietude that needs

such dishonesty to cover it. Do not suspect the man of being honest. There are two sorts of infidels, one sort are such fools that they know they never could distinguish themselves by anything that was right, so they try and get a little fictitious glory by pretending to believe and defend a lie. There are another set of men who are unquiet in their consciences; they do not like the Bible because it does not like them; it will not let them be comfortable in their sins, it is such an uneasy book to them; they did put their heads upon it once, but it was like a pillow stuffed with thorns, so they have done with it, and they would be very glad if they could actually prove it to be untrue, which they know they cannot. I say then, I at once despise his falsehood, and pity the uneasiness of his conscience that could drive him to such a paltry shift as this, to cover his terrors from the eyes of others. The more the man brags, the more I feel he does not mean it; the louder he is in his blasphemies, the more he curses, the better he argues, the more sure I am that he is not sincere, except in his desire to stifle the groans of his uneasy spirit. Ah, you remind me with your fine arguments, of the Chinese soldiers. When they go out to battle, they carry on their arm a shield with hideous monsters depicted upon it, and making the loudest noise they can, they imagine their opponents will run away instantly, alarmed by these amazing manifestations. And, so you arm yourself with blasphemies and come out to attack God's ministers, and think we will run away because of your sophistries. No, we smile upon them contemptuously. Once, we are told, the Chinese hung across their harbour, when the English were coming to attack them, a string of tigers' heads. They said: "These barbarians will never dare to pass these ferocious heads." So do these men hang a string of old, worn-out blasphemies and impieties and then they imagine that conscience will not be able to attack them, and that God himself will

let them live at peace. Ah sir, you shall find the red-hot bullets of divine justice too many and too terrible for your sophisms. When you shall fall under the Arm of the Eternal God, vain will be your logic then. Dashed to shivers, you will believe in the omnipotence, when you are made to feel it; you will know his justice when it is too late to escape from its terror. Oh, be wise, cast away these day dreams. Cease to shut thy soul out of heaven; be wise, turn thee unto God whom thou hast abused. For "All manner of sin and blasphemy, shall be forgiven unto man." He is ready to forgive you, ready to receive you, and Christ is ready to wash your blasphemy away. Now, to-day, if grace enable you, you may be an accepted child of that God whom you have hated, and pressed to the bosom of that Jehovah whose very existence you have dared to deny. God bless these words to you: if they have seemed hard, they were only meant to come home to your conscience; an affectionate heart has led me to utter them. Oh, do not this evil thing. Suck not in these infidel notions; destroy not your soul, for the sake of seeming to be wise, stop not the voice of your conscience by those arguments which you know in your inmost soul are not true, which you only repeat in order to keep up a semblance of consistency.

3. I shall come now to a third class of men. These are people not particularly addicted to gaiety, nor especially given to infidel notions; but they are a sort of folk who are careless, and determined to let well alone. Their motto is, "Let tomorrow take care for the things of itself; let us live while we live; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." If their conscience cries out at all, they bid it lie still. When the minister disturbs them, instead of listening to what he says, and so being brought into a state of real peace, they cry, "Hush! be quiet! there is time enough yet; I will not disturb myself with these childish fears: be still, sir, and lie down." Ah! and

you have been doing this for years, have you? Whenever you have heard an earnest powerful sermon, you have gone home and labored to get rid of it. A tear has stolen down your cheek now and then, and you have despised yourself for it. "Oh!" you say, "it is not manly for me to think of these things." There have been a few twitches at times which you could not help, but the moment after you have your heart like a flint, impenetrably hard and stony. Well sir, I will give you a picture of yourself. There is a foolish farmer yonder in his house. It is the dead of night: the burglars are breaking in--men who will neither spare his life nor his treasure. There is a dog down below chained in the yard, it barks and barks, and howls again. "I cannot be quiet," says the farmer, "my dog makes too much noise." Another howl, and yet another yell. He creeps out of bed, gets his loaded gun, opens the window, fires it, and kills the dog. "Ah! it is all right now," he mutters; he goes to bed, lies down, and quietly rests. "No hurt will come," he says, "now; for I have made that dog quiet. Ah! but would that he could have listened to the warning of the faithful creature. Ere long he shall feel the knife, and rue his fatal folly. So you, when God is warning you--when your faithful conscience is doing its best to save you--you try to kill your only friend, while Satan and Sin are stealing up to the bedside of your slothfulness, and are ready to destroy your soul for ever and ever. What should we think of the sailor at sea who should seek to kill all the stormy petrels, that there might be an end to all storms? Would you not say, "Poor foolish man! why those birds are sent by a kind providence to warn him of the tempest. Why needs he injure them? They cause not the tumult; it is the raging sea." So it is not your conscience that is guilty of the disturbance in your heart, it is your sin, and your conscience, acting true to its character, as God's index in your soul, tells you that all is wrong.

Would that ye would arise, and take the warning, and fly to Jesus while the hour of mercy lasts.

To use another picture. A man sees his enemy before him. By the light of his candle he marks his insidious approach. His enemy looks fierce and black upon him, and is seeking his life. The man puts out the candle, and then exclaims, "I am now quite at peace." This is what you do. Conscience is the candle of the Lord, it shows you your enemy; you try to put it out by saying, "Peace, peace." Put the enemy out, sir I put the enemy out! God give you grace to thrust sin out! Oh may the Holy Spirit enable you to thrust your lusts out of doors! Then let the candle burn; and the more brightly its light shall shine, the better for your soul, now and hereafter. Oh! up ye sleepers, ye gaggers of conscience, what mean you? Why are you sleeping when death is hastening on, when eternity is near, when the great white throne is even now coming on the clouds of heaven when the trumpet of the resurrection is now being set to the mouth of the archangel--why do ye sleep! why will ye slumber? Oh that the voice of Jehovah might speak and make ye wake, that ye may escape from the wrath to come!

4. A fourth set of men have a kind of peace that is the result of resolutions which they have made, but which they will never carry into effect. "Oh," saith one, "I am quite easy enough in my mind, for when I have got a little more money I shall retire from business, and then I shall begin to think about eternal things." Ah, but I would remind you that when you were an apprentice, you said you would reform when you became a journeyman; and when you were a journeyman, you used to say you would give good heed when you became a master. But hitherto these bills have never been paid when they became due. They have every one of them been dishonored as yet, and take my word for it, this new accommodation bill will be dishonored too. So you think to stifle

conscience by what you will do by-and-bye. Ah, but will that by-and-bye ever come? And should it come, what reason is there to expect that you will then be any more ready than you are now. Hearts grow harder, sin grows stronger, vice becomes more deeply rooted by the lapse of years. You will find it certainly no easier to turn to God then than now. Now it is impossible to you, apart from divine grace; then it shall be quite as impossible, and if I might say so, there shall be more difficulties in the way then than even there are now. What think you is the value of these promises which you have made in the court of heaven? Will God take your word again, and again, and again, when you have broken it just as often as you have given it? Not long ago you were lying on your bed with fever, and if you lived you vowed you would repent. Have you repented? And yet you are fool enough to believe that you will repent by-and-bye, and on the strength of this promise, which is not worth a single straw, you are crying to yourself "peace, peace when there is no peace." A man that waits for a more convenient season for thinking about the affairs of his soul, is like the countryman in Aesop's fable, who sat down by a flowing river, saying, "If this steam continues to flow as it does now for a little while it will empty itself, and then I shall walk over dry-shod." Ah, but the stream was just as deep when he had waited day after day as it was before. And so shall it be with you. You remind me by your procrastination of the ludicrous position of a man who should sit upon a lofty branch of some tree with a saw in his hand, cutting away the branch on which he was sitting. This is what you are doing. Your delay is cutting away your branch of life. No doubt you intend to cover the well when the child is drowned and to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen. These birds in the hand you are losing, because their may be some better hour, some better bird in the bush. You are thus getting a little

quiet, but oh, at what a fatal cost! Paul was troublesome to you, and so you played the part of Felix, and said, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Conscience was unquiet, so you stopped his mouth with this sop for Cerberus; and you have gone to your bed with this lie under your pillow, with this falsehood in your right hand--that you will be better by-and-bye. Ah, sir, let me tell you once for all, you live to grow worse and worse. While you are procrastinating, time is not staying, nor is Satan resting. While you are saying, "Let things abide," things are not abiding, but they are hastening on. You are ripening for the dread harvest, the sickle is being sharpened that shall cut you down, and the fire is even now blazing into which your spirit shall be cast for ever.

5. Now I turn to another class of men, in order that I may miss none here who are saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." I do not doubt but that many of the people of London enjoy peace in their hearts, because they are ignorant of the things of God. It would positively alarm many of our sober orthodox Christians, if they could once have an idea of the utter ignorance of spiritual things that reigns throughout this land. Some of us, when moving about here and there, in all glasses of society, have often been led to remark, that there is less known of the truths of religion than of any science, however recondite that science may be. Take as a lamentable instance, the ordinary effusions of the secular press, and who can avoid remarking the ignorance they manifest as to true religion. Let the papers speak on politics, it is a matter they understand, and their ability is astonishing, but, once let them touch religion, and our Sabbath-school children could convict them of entire ignorance. The statements they put forth are so crude, so remote from the fact, that we are led to imagine that the presentation of a fourpenny testament to

special correspondents, should be one of the first efforts of our societies for spreading the gospel among the heathen. As to theology, some of our great writers seem to be as little versed in it as a horse or a cow. Go among all ranks and classes of men, and singe the day we gave up our catechism, and old Dr. Watts' and the Assemblies ceased to be used, people have not a clear idea of what is meant by the gospel of Christ. I have frequently heard it asserted, by those who have judged the modern pulpit without severity, that if a man attended a course of thirteen lectures on geology, he would get a pretty clear idea of the system, but that you might hear not merely thirteen sermons, but thirteen hundred sermons and you would not have a clear idea of the system of divinity that was meant to be taught. I believe that to a large extent that has been true. But the great change which has passed over the pulpit within the last two years, is a cause of the greatest thankfulness to God; and we believe will be a boon to the church and to the world at large. Ministers do preach more boldly than they did. There is more evangelical doctrine I believe preached in London now, in any one Sunday, than there was in a month before. But still there is in many quarters a profound ignorance as to the things of Christ. Our old Puritans--what masters they were in divinity! They knew the difference between the old covenant and the new; they did not mingle works and grace together. They penetrated into the recesses of gospel truth; they were always studying the Scriptures, and meditating on them both by day and night, and they shed a light upon the villages in which they preached, until you might have found in those days as profound theologians working upon stone heaps, as you can find in colleges and universities now a days. How few discern the spirituality of the law, the glory of the atonement, the perfection of justification, the beauty of sanctification, and the preciousness of real union to Christ. I do

not marvel that we have a multitude of men who are mere professors and mere formalists, who are nevertheless quite as comfortable in their minds as though they were possessors of vital godliness, and really walked in the true fear of God.

There was not--I speak of things that were--there was not in the pulpit a little while ago, a discernment between things that differ; there was not a separating between the precious and the vile. The grand cardinal points of the Gospel, if not denied, were ignored. We began to think that the thinkers would overwhelm the believers, that intellectuality and philosophy would overthrow the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. It is not so now, I do, therefore, hope, that as the Gospel shall be more fully preached, that as the words of Jesus shall be better understood, that as the things of the kingdom of heaven shall be set in a clearer light, this stronghold of a false peace, namely, ignorance of Gospel doctrines, shall be battered to its foundations, and the foundation-stones themselves dug up and cast away for over. If you have a peace that is grounded on ignorance, get rid of it; ignorance is a thing, remember, that you are accountable for. You are not accountable for the exercise of your judgment to man, but you are accountable for it to God. There is no such thing as toleration of your sentiments with Jehovah; I have no right to judge you; I am your fellow-creature. No State has any right to dictate what religion I will believe; but nevertheless, there is a true gospel, and there are thousands of false ones. God has given you judgment, use it. Search the Scriptures, and remember that if you neglect this Word of God, and remain ignorant, your sins of ignorance will be sins of wilful ignorance, and therefore ignorance shall be no excuse. There is the Bible, you have it in your houses; you can read it. God the Holy Spirit will instruct you in its meaning; and if you remain ignorant, charge it no more on the minister;

charge it on no one but yourself, and make it no cloak for your sin.

6. I now pass to another and more dangerous form of this false peace. I may have missed some of you, probably; I shall come closer home to you now. Alas, alas, let us weep and weep again, for there is a plague among us. There are members of our churches who are saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." It is the part of candour to admit that with all the exercise of judgment, and the most rigorous discipline, we cannot keep our churches free from hypocrisy. I have had to hear, to the very breaking of my heart, stories of men and women who have believed the doctrines of election, and other truths of the gospel, and have made them a sort of cover for the most frightful iniquity. I could, without uncharitableness, point to churches that are hot-beds of hypocrisy, because men are taught that it is the belief of a certain set of sentiments that will save them, and not warned that this is all in vain without a real living faith in Christ. The preacher does as good as say, if not in so many words: "If you are orthodox, if you believe what I tell you, you are saved; if you for a moment turn aside from that line which I have chalked out for you, I cannot be accountable for you; but if you will give me your whole heart, and believe precisely what I say, whether it is Scripture or not; then you are a saved man." And we know persons of that cast, who can have their shop open on a Sunday, and then go to enjoy what they call a savoury sermon in the evening; men who mix up with drunkards, and yet say they are God's elect; men who live as others live, and yet they come before you, and with brazen impudence, tell you that they are redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is true they have had a deep experience, as they say. God save us from such a muddy experience as that! They have had, they say, a great manifestation of the depravity of their hearts, but still they are the precious children of God. Precious, indeed! Dear at

any price that any man should give for them. If they be precious to anybody, I am sure I wish they were taken to their own place, for they are not precious to any one here below, and they are not of the slightest use to either religion or morality. Oh! I do not know of a more thoroughly damnable delusion than for a man to get a conceit into his head, that he is a child of God, and yet live in sin--to talk to you about grace, while he is living in sovereign lust--to stand up and make himself the arbiter of what is truth, while he himself contemns the precept of God, and tramples the commandment under foot. Hard as Paul was on such man in his time--when he said their damnation is just--he spoke a most righteous sentence. Surely, the devil gloats over men of this kind. A Calvinist I am, but John Calvin never taught immoral doctrine. A more consistent expositor of Scripture than that great reformer I believe never lived, but his doctrine is not the Hyper-Calvinism of these modern times, but is as diametrically opposed to it as light to darkness. There is not a word in any one of his writings that would justify any man in going on in iniquity that grace might abound. If you do not hate sin, it is all the same what doctrine you may believe. You may go to perdition as rapidly with High-Calvinistic doctrine as with any other. You are just as surely destroyed in an orthodox as in a heterodox church unless your life manifests that you have been "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

7. I have but one other class of persons to describe, and then I shall have done when I have addressed a few solemn sentences of warning to you all. There remains yet another class of beings who surpass all these in their utter indifference to everything that might arouse them. They are men that are given up by God, justly given up. They have passed the boundary of his longsuffering. He has said, "My spirit shall

no more strive with them;" "Ephraim is given unto idols, let him alone." As a judicial punishment for their impenitence, God has given them up to pride and hardness of heart. I will not say that there is such an one here--God grant there may not be such a man--but there have been such to whom there has been given a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they might be damned because they received not the gospel of Christ. Brought up by a holy mother, they perhaps learned the gospel when they were almost in the cradle. Trained by the example of a holy father, they went aside to wantonness, and brought a mother's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Nevertheless, conscience still pursued them. At the funeral of that mother, the young man paused and asked himself the question, "Have I killed her! have I brought her here?" He went home was sober for a day, was tempted by a companion, and became as bad as ever. Another warning came. He was seized with sickness; he lay in the jaws of the grave; he woke up; he lived, and lived as vilely as he had lived before. Often did he hear his mother's voice--though she was in the grave, she being dead yet spoke to him. He put the Bible on the top shelf--hid it away; still, sometimes a text he had learned in infancy used to thrust itself in on his mind. One night as he was going to some haunt of vice, something arrested him, conscience seemed to say to him, "Remember all that you have learned of her." He stood still, bit his lip a moment, considered, weighed chances. At last he said, "I will go if I am lost." He went, and from that moment it has often been a source of wonder to him that he has never thought of his mother nor of the Bible. He hears a sermon, which he does not heed. It is all the same to him. He is never troubled. He says, "I don't know how it is; I am glad of it; I am as easy now and as frolicsome as ever a young fellow could be." Oh I I tremble to explain this quietude; but it may be--God grant I may not be a true prophet--it

may be that God has thrown the reins on your neck, and said, "Let him go, let him go, I will warn him no more; he shall be filled with his own ways; he shall go the length of his chain; I will never stop him." Mark! if it be so, your damnation is as sure as if you were in the pit now. O may God grant that I may not have such a hearer here. But that dread thought may well make you search yourselves, for it may be so. There is that possibility; search and look, and God grant that you may no more say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Now for these last few solemn words. I will not be guilty this morning, of speaking any smooth falsehoods to you, I would be faithful with each man, as I believe I shall have to face you all at God's great day, even though you heard me but once in your lives. Well, then, let me tell you that if you have a peace to-day which enables you to be at peace with your sins as well as with God, that peace is a false peace. Unless you hate sin of every sort, with all your heart, you are not a child of God, you are not reconciled to God by the death of his Son. You will not be perfect; I cannot expect you will live without sin, but if you are a Christian you will hate the very sin into which you have been betrayed, and hate yourself because you should have grieved your Savior thus. But if you love sin, the love of the Father is not in you. Be you who you may, or what you may,--minister, deacon, elder, professor, or non-professor--the love of sin is utterly inconsistent with the love of Christ. Take that home, and remember it.

Another solemn thought. If you are at peace to-day through a belief that you are righteous in yourself, you are not at peace with God. If you are wrapping yourself up in your own righteousness and saying, "I am as good as other people, I have kept God's law, and have no need for mercy," you are not at peace with God. You are treasuring up in your impenitent heart wrath against the day of wrath; and you will as surely

be lost if you trust to your good works, as if you had trusted to your sins. There is a clean path to hell as well as a dirty one. There is as sure a road to perdition along the highway of morality, as down the slough of vice. Take heed that you build on nothing else but Christ; for if you do, your house will tumble about your ears, when most you need its protection.

And, yet again, my hearer, if thou art out of Christ, however profound may be thy peace, it is a false one; for out of Christ there is no true peace to the conscience and no reconciliation to God. Ask thyself this question, "Do I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart? Is he my only trust, the simple, solitary rock of my refuge?" For if not, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, and dying as thou art, out of Christ, thou wilt be shut out of heaven; where God and bliss are found, thy soul can never come.

And now, finally, let me beseech you, if you are at peace in your own mind this morning, weigh your peace thus: "Will my peace stand me on a sick bed?" There are many that are peaceful enough when they are well, but when their bongs begin to ache, and their flesh is sore vexed, then they find they want something more substantial than this dreamy quietness into which their souls had fallen. If a little sickness makes you shake, if the thought that your heart is affected, or that you may drop down dead in a fit on a sudden--if that startles you, then put that question of Jeremy to yourself, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do when thou contendest with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou hadst trusted they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? If sickness make thee shake what will destruction make thee do?" Then again, put the question in another light. If your peace is good for

anything, it is one that will bear you up in a dying hour. Are you ready to go home to your bed now to lie there and never rise again? For remember, that which will not stand a dying bed will never stand the day of judgment. If my hope begins to quiver, even when the skeleton hand of Death begins to touch me, how will it shake, "When God's right arm is nerved for war, and thunders clothe his cloudy ear?" If death makes me startle, what will the glory of God do? How shall I shrink into nothing, and fly away from him in despair! Then often put to thyself this question, "Will my peace last me when the heavens are in a blaze, and when the trembling universe stands to be judged?"

Oh my dear hearers, I know I have spoken feebly to you this morning; not as I could have wished, but I do entreat you if what I have said be not an idle dream, if it be not a mere myth of my imagination; if it be true, lay it to heart, and may God enable you to prepare to meet him. Do not be wrapping yourselves up, and slumbering, and sleeping. Awake, ye sleepers, awake! Oh! that I had a trumpet voice to warn you. Oh! while you are dying, while you are sinking into perdition, may I not cry to you; may not these eyes weep for you! I cannot be extravagant here, I am acquitted of being enthusiastic or fanatical on such a matter as this. Take to heart, I beseech you, the realities of eternity. Do not for ever waste your time. "Oh, turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel." Listen, now, to the word of the Gospel, which is sent to you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved." For "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," while the solemn sentence remains, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Chapter 15

Jesus About His Father's Business

A Sermon

(No. 302)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 4th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."--John 4:34.

IT IS PECULIARLY PLEASING to the Christian to observe the interest which God the Father takes in the work of salvation. In our earlier days of childhood in grace, we conceived the idea that God the Father was only made propitious to us through the atonement of Christ that Jesus was the Savior, and that the Father was rather an austere Judge than a tender friend. But since then, we have learned the Father through the Son: for it was not possible we could come unto the Father except through Jesus Christ. But, now, having seen Christ, we have seen the Father also, and from henceforth, we both know the Father, and have seen him, since we know the love of Christ, and have felt it shed abroad in our hearts. It is always refreshing then, to the enlightened Christian, to call to mind the intense interest which the Father takes in the work of salvation. Here you find in this verse it is three times hinted at. Salvation-work is called the Father's will. "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish;" but more, it is his will that his chosen, the blood-bought ones of Christ, should every one of them be redeemed from the ruins of the fall, and brought safely home to their Father's house. Note, again, we are told that Jesus was sent of the Father. Here,

again, you see the Father's interest. It is true that Jesus rent himself away from the glories of heaven, from the felicities of blessedness, and voluntarily descended to the scorn, the shame, and spitting of this lower world. But, yet his Father had a part therein. He gave up his only begotten Son; he withheld not the darling of his bosom, but sent away his well-beloved, and sent him down with messages of love to man. Jesus Christ comes willingly, but still he comes by his Father's appointment and sending. A third hint is also given us. Salvation is here called God's work: "It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." We know that when this world was made, the Father did not make it without reference to the Spirit, for "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," brooded over chaos, and brought order out of confusion. Nor did he make it without the Son; for we are told by John the Apostle, "Without him was not anything made that was made." Yet, at the same time, creation was the Father's work. So also is it in salvation; the Father does not save without the Spirit, for "the Spirit quickeneth whom he will." He doth not save without the Son, for it is through the merit of the Redeemer's death that we are delivered from the demerit of our iniquity. But, notwithstanding this, God the Father is the worker of salvation as much as he is the worker of creation. Let us look up then, with eyes of delight, to our reconciled God and Father. O Lord our GOD, thou art not an angry one! Thou art not an austere ruler! "Thou art not merely the Judge but thou art the grand patriarch of thy people! Thou art their great friend! Thou lovest them better than thou didst thy Son! For thou didst not spare him--thou didst send him down to suffer and to die, that thou mightest bring thy children home. "Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

The particular contemplation of this morning will be however, to describe Christ Jesus as he manifests himself as doing his Father's will, and finishing his Father's work. Our Lord and Master had but one thought, but one wish, but one aim. He concentrated his whole soul, gathered up the vast floods of his mighty powers, and sent them in one channel, rushing towards one great end: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

1. In bringing out the great truth of Christ's entire devotedness to the work of salvation--a devotedness so great that he could say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up,"--I shall want to call your attention first of all to the fact, verified be the gospels, that his soul was in all that he did. Mark our Master when he goes about doing good. The task is not irksome to him. There are some men who if they distribute to the poor, or if they comfort the fatherless, do it with such reserve with such coldness of spirit, that you can perceive that it is but the shell of the man that acts, and not the man's whole soul. But see our divine Lord. Wherever he walks, you see his whole self in flame. his whole being at work. Not a single power slumbers, but the whole man is engaged. How much at ease he seems among his poor fishermen! You do not discover that his thoughts are away in the halls of kings; but he is a fellow with them, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. He walks in the midst of publicans and harlots, and he is not ill at ease; not like one who is condescending to do a work which he feels to be beneath him; he is pleased with it, his whole soul is in it. Mark how he takes the little children on his knee, and though his disciples would put them away, yet his whole spirit is set truly with the poor, with the sinful, whom he came to save, that he says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Look up into that face, and there is a whole-soured man there;

not one whose thoughts are set on dignity and power, and who is schooling himself down, toning down his mind to the circle in which he moves, as a matter of constraint and duty. His vocation becomes his delight. His Father's service is his element. He is never happy when he is out of it. He casts his whole being, his whole spirit, into the work of man's redemption.

2. As a further proof of his devotedness, you will observe that whatever a man takes to heart as being the object of his life, it always makes him glad when he sees it succeeding. How you notice in our Savior's life, that when he goes into a pharisee's house to eat bread he always seems under constraint. In any chapter which records what Jesus said in the house of a pharisee there is a want of vivacity. He speaks solemnly, but evidently his spirit is spell-bound, he is unhappy. He knows that he is watched by cavillers who resist his good work, and he there saith but very little, or else his discourse hath but little joy and brilliance therein. But see him among publicans; when he is sitting down with Zaccheus, or when he is come into some poor man's house and is sitting down to his ordinary meal; there is Jesus Christ with His eyes flashing, his lips pouring forth eloquence, and his whole soul at ease. "Now," says he, "I am at home; here is my work; here are the people among whom I shall succeed." How the man snaps his chain! You see the Lord Jesus Christ as the child-man, no more restraining himself before the watchers, but speaking out of his full soul all that his heart thinks and feels. Now you generally know when a man's heart is in his work, by the joy he feels in it. You see some preachers go up into their pulpits as though they were going to be roasted at the stake; and they read their sermons through as if they were making their last dying speech and confession. What do you think they call it?--why, doing their duty. True ministers call preaching

pleasure, not duty. It is a delight to stand up to tell to others the way of salvation and to magnify Christ. But mere hirelings cannot go higher than the idea of doing their duty when they are telling out this glorious tale. Jesus Christ was none of these. "My meat is" he said, "to do the will of him that sent me." The only times that Jesus ever smiled and rejoiced are the times when he was in the midst of poor sinners. At that time "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Let him see a penitent, let him hear the groan of a sinner mourning over his evil way, let him discern a tear trickling down the cheek of one of his hearers, and Jesus Christ begins to be glad, and the Man of Sorrows wears a smile for a moment upon that pale and sorrowful face. At all times there is a travailing in birth for souls: he is only happy when he sees the family of God enlarged.

3. There is another test by which you may know when a man's spirit is in his work. When a right noble lord, some little time ago, stood up in the House of Lords to speak against the infamous productions and prints of Holywell Street, I felt quite sure that his lordship was thoroughly in earnest, because he grew angry. After some person had ventured to defend the filth that comes forth from that street, as if it had some connection with the glories of art, his lordship replied in a very tart speech, which at once let you see that he meant what he said, and that he felt the work upon which he had entered to be an important one. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ sometimes grew warm in speech, but he was never angry except with men who opposed the good work with which he came, and not even with them if he saw that they opposed it through ignorance, but only with those who stood up against him on account of pride and vain glory. Did ye ever read such a mighty tirade of threatening as

that which roars from Christ when he is speaking against the Pharisees? "But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

"Methinks I see his holy cheeks glowing with a divine furore, when he hurls his thunderbolts about him, and denounces the men who shut up the gates of heaven, and will not enter in themselves, and they that would enter in they hinder. Now, you can see that his soul is in it, because the man grows warm. The loving spirit of Jesus, who was trodden on like a worm, who would never defend himself who had not a spark of resentment towards his persecutors, but "when he was reviled, reviled not again," who gave blessings for curses--oh! how he kindles into a flame when he sees enemies! in the way of his poor people whom he has come to save! Then, indeed, he spares no words. Then can he ply the lash with a mighty hand, and let them see that the voices of Jesus can be as terrible as thunder, while, at other times, it can be sweet as harpers harping with their harps.

4. A sure evidence that a man has espoused some mighty purpose, and that his purpose has saturated his whole soul, and steeped him in its floods, is, that if he be unsuccessful, he will weep. Now, see our Lord. Were there ever such tears shed as those which he poured forth over Jerusalem? Standing on the hilltops, he saw its towers and its

glittering temple, and he discerned in the dim future the day when it should be burned with fire, and the ploughshare of destruction should be driven o'er its once fair, but then desolate, foundations and he cries, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem I how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, end ye would not!" Oh that wail of his,--"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" Does it not remind you of those words of God in one of the old prophets, where weeping over Ephraim, he saith "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Jehovah's bowels yearned to clasp his Ephraim to his breast. And so with Jesus. They may spit in his face, and he weeps not. They may drag him out of the synagogue and seek to cast him headlong down the brow of the hill, but I find not that he sighs. They may nail him to the cross, and yet there shall be ne'er a tear. The only thing that can make him weep is to see that they reject their own mercy, that they put away from them their only hope, and refuse to walk in that only way of peace. This alone might serve as a proof of the intensity of Jesus' soul in his great purpose. He must save others; and if they be not saved, he will weep. If others oppose their salvation he will grow angry; not for himself but for them. Careless of what happens to himself, he has no fear, no anger for injuries that are poured on him, but his whole spirit is given up to the one great work of rescuing souls from sin, and sinners from going down into the pit.

5. It often happens, however, that when we are really earnest about some purpose, some enemy will rise up. Unconscious, perhaps, of the nobility of our purpose, he will misconstrue our motives, vilify our character, and tread our fair name in the dust. There is a strong temptation at such seasons to defend one's self. We want to say just a

word about one's own sincerity and heartiness of purpose. The temptation comes very strongly on us, because we think that we ourselves are so wrapped up, so intimately connected with the work, that perhaps, if our name be injured that work may suffer also. How many good and great men have fallen into this snare, so that they have left their work in order to take care of themselves, and have at least diminished some little of their ardor, or commingled the ardor which they feel for those objects with another fervency of spirit--the fervency of self-defense. Now, in our Lord Jesus Christ you see nothing of this. He is so set upon his purpose that when they call him a drunkard he doth not deny it; when they say he is a Samaritan and is mad, he takes it silently and seems to say, "Be it so; think so, if you will." Now and then there is a word of complaint, but not of accusation. When it is really for their good he will rebuke them, and say, "How can Beelzebub cast out Beelzebub?" But there is no elaborate defense of his character. Christ has left on record, in his sermons, no apology for anything he said. He just went about his work and did it, and left men to think what they pleased about him. He knew right well that contempt and shame from some men are but another phase of glory, and that to suffer the despite of a depraved race was to be glorified in the presence of his Father, and in the midst of his holy angels. Yet we might wonder (if we did not know who he was) that some little personal animosity did not sometimes creep in; but you never detect a shade of it. Many there were, I dare say, whom he knew to be his dire enemies; he has not a word to say against them. Some would come up in the street to insult him; I do not find that he took the slightest notice of them. Many there were, too, that spread all manner of ill reports, but he never told his disciples to try and stop the ill tale that was abroad. He treated with silent pity the calumnies of men, and

walked on in the majesty of his goodness, defying all men to say what they pleased, for all their devices could no more make him turn aside from his course than the baying of the dog can make the moon stand still in her orbit. And so, too good to be selfish, too glorious to care for any one's esteem, he could not and would not turn aside, bus as an arrow from the bow of some mighty archer, he sped on his way towards his destined) target.

6. Then, mark again, another proof qf the full devotedness of Christ to his ministry namely, that you always see him laboring. The three years of Christ's ministry were three years of ceaseless toil. He never rested: one wonders how he lived at all. It is but little marvel that his poor body was emaciated, and that his visage was more marred than that of any man. What with stern conflicts with Satan in the desert--conflicts so severe, that, if you and I were to undergo them, they might make our hairs turn grey in a single night; what with conflicts with the crowd of men who all seemed to rise up at once against him, like warriors armed to the teeth, while he stood like a defenseless lamb in the midst of cruel wolves--what with preaching, with more private teaching, with healing the sick and the lepers, restoring the maimed, the deaf, the blind; going about everywhere doing good, and never ceasing in his journeys, walking every inch of his way on foot, save when he was tossed on the stormy bosom of the lake, in some small boat which belonged to his disciples--never having a home wherein to dwell, crying, "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"--surely never man labored like this man. That three years of our Savior's ministry reads like the history of three centuries. It is the life of a man who is living at a matchless rate. His minutes are all hours; his hours all months; his months all years; or longer still than

that. He does enough in one day to give a man eternal fame, and yet, thinking nothing of it, he goes to something yet more arduous; and on, and on, and on, he toils his whole life through. The most hard working man among us has his hours of sleep. Give us but sleep and we can do anything, we rise up from our beds like giants refreshed with new wine, to run our course anew. But Jesus sleeps not.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air,
Witness the fervor of his prayer."

He has stood up to preach all day long; he has fed thousands. and at last he faints. His disciples take him even as he is, for he cannot walk, his strength is gone; and they carry him down to the boat and lay him there. He shuts his eyes, he is about to have some little repose but they come to him, and cry, "Master, why sleepest thou? Awake! we perish." And he arises to rebuke the waves, and finds himself on another shore, and in another field of labor, upon which he enters at once without delay. He seems to have known no moment of repose. He preaches day by day, he prays by night. He seemed to be a sun that never had a setting, always shining always progressing in his mighty course. Oh! there never was such a worker never such a toiler as this Lord Jesus, who toiled not for himself but for others.

7. And here let me remark, again, that I may give you another proof that his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, namely, that at many times when he was in full labor he does not seem to have felt fatigue at all. He had been walking one hot day along the dusty road, under the burning sun; and he comes at last to the well of Sychar. Being very weary, he sat down on the well. He was hungry, too, for his disciples had gone away to buy meat. That little wallet which Judas carried was not often full enough to afford meat for luxury; they could only buy for mere necessity. They doubtless had enough in that little

bag, which was filled by the voluntary gifts of those among whom he labored, to keep those twelve men with daily bread, but they had none to spare. I conclude, then, that our Savior needed meat, or they would not have gone away to buy it. They come back after they have bought their meat, and they find their Master sitting on the well preaching to a woman. She goes away and they wonder how it is he does not eat. He tells them he needs no food, he has been refreshed, he had seen that woman converted. A woman who had had five husbands, and was then living with one who was not her husband, had listened to his voice, and she had been saved, and he saw her go away to bring the men to hear. He expected a harvest; he saw the fields white and ready for it; and this so refreshed his spirit that he did not need to eat. And we read at another time he forgot to eat bread, and at another season we read they thronged him in, "insomuch that he was not able to eat." Yet he could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He seemed to get refreshed in his work to grow stronger amid his toils; instead of growing tired, he renewed his strength; as he went on with his sacred labors. Now, this could not have happened to Christ, unless his whole soul was in it. Those of you who have ever undertaken an enterprise with all your might, know that as that has been going on you have been so absorbed that you did hot know when it was time for you to eat, and when at last you have seen success dawning upon you, if any one had hinted that you needed bread, you would put him by and say, "Don't disturb me; let me watch; let me see this light come to its full blaze of noon day." You have needed no other refreshment than that which success, has given you. I could myself give an illustration of this, which occurred to me a little while ago, to prove that fact. Coming from home early in the morning, I went to the chapel, sat there all day long seeing those who had been brought to Christ through the preaching

of the Word. Their stories were so interesting to me that the day went on. I may have seen some thirty or more during the day, one after the other, as they came up to me. I was so delighted with the tales they told me, and the wonders of grace that God had wrought in them, that I did not know anything about how the day went. Seven o'clock came for prayer-meeting. I went in and prayed with the brethren. After that came the church-meeting. A little before ten o'clock I felt faint, and I began to think at what hour I had had my dinner, and I found that I had had none; I never thought of it, I never felt hungry, because God had made me so glad with success. I think we could live right on, almost without food, if God would sustain us daily with this divine manna--this heavenly food of success--in winning souls. This showed that our Master's heart was in it: for the toil needed no refreshment.

8. Then, again, if I have not said enough to convince you that he gave his whole spirit to the work; let me remark that many a man has espoused a purpose, and, as he imagined, has betrothed himself to it by eternal nuptials, yet at last he has been divorced from the darling object. He has seen some path of brightness opening to him with some glittering honor at the end, and he has turned aside to selfaggrandisement and glory. But our Lord had a prospect before him, such as no man ever had. Satan took him to the brow of a hill, and offered him all the kingdoms of this world a mightier dominion even than Caesar had--if he would bow down and worship him. That temptation was substantially repeated in Christ's life a thousand times. You remember one practical instance as a specimen of the whole. "They would have taken him by force and would have made him a king." And if he had but pleased to accept that offer, on the day when he rode into Jerusalem upon a colt, the foal of an ass when all cried "Hosanna!" when the palm branches were waving, he had needed to have done nothing

but just to have gone into the temple, to have commanded with authority the priest to pour the sacred chrism publicly upon his head, and he would have been king of the Jews. Not with the mock title which he wore upon the cross, but with a real dignity he might have been monarch of nations. As for the Romans, his omnipotence could have swept away the intruders. He could have lifted up Judea into a glory as great as the golden days of Solomon: he might have built Palmyras and Tadmors in the desert: he might have stormed Egypt and have taken Rome. There was no empire that could have resisted him. With a band of zealots such as that nation could have furnished, and with such a leader capable of working miracles walking in the van, the star of Judea might have risen with resplendent light, and a visible kingdom might have come, and his will might have been done on earth, from the river unto the ends of the earth. But he came not to establish a carnal kingdom upon earth, else would his followers fight: he came to wear the thorn-crown, to bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows. And from that single object the most splendid temptation could not make him diverge. You may heap together the glittering pomps and the gaudy jewels, but he treads them all beneath his feet. The Cross to him is brighter than a crown, the suffering more dear than wealth and honor. So then, in this too, we may see how full was his purpose, and how firmly he was set on the salvation of man.

9. One other thought here. If we knew that some purpose which we had undertaken could never be achieved unless by our death, supposing that we could bring our mind to give up our blood as the price of success--if we knew that after the most toilsome effort, though the walls of the structure might rise, yet our own tomb must furnish the topstone--if we resolve to die for it, yet I can well conceive that firmly as our purpose might be set, we should dread the hour. Let it be

at a distance, we should say. And if we were told it was drawing near, we should sigh, and our spirit would sink. But not so, Christ. Do you observe throughout his life in what a hurry he is? Read the gospel according to St. Mark. The gospel of St. Mark is the gospel of the servant. The chosen emblem in the old church windows represents St. Mark as the ox, the laborious ox. Each of the evangelists had his own particular idiom, and the idiomatic expression of St. Mark is the word, Eutheos, which we translate "straightway," "immediately." You will see if you read the evangelist through, that the word "straightway," "immediately," occurs more frequently in that book than in any other, perhaps more times than in all the rest of the Word of God besides, to teach us this lesson, that Christ as a servant was in haste to fulfll his mission; never loitering, but always doing it straightway. He seems to me to be always stretching out his hands after the cross; not standing back from it, as if he knew it must come to him by necessity. No, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His soul was speeding towards the cross, and his body seemed to be straitened, encaged, imprisoned, that it could not get to the end of this three years of labor. His soul was panting after suffering; groaning, crying out to be permitted to drink of the cup of our redemption even to the dregs. Now, this majesty of purpose, not merely to die, but to pant for death--not simply to climb the wall, to lead the forlorn hope and to long to do it, to be panting for the battle, desiring the fight, longing for the suffering--this is heroic ardor, self devotion entirely unexampled! I could hardly imagine a man panting for the fight an hour before it begins, but all his life long to be desiring to enter upon It, to be panting for that bloody sweat, to be sighing for those nails, that shame, that spitting, this showed how strongly our Lord Jesus Christ had bent all his thoughts to

the divine purpose of doing his Father's will, and finishing his Father's work.

Now, I shall say no more upon this subject by way of proof. I come very briefly to make the practical we thereof.

The first practical inference is addressed to the timid, agonized soul, who desires salvation, but who thinks that Christ is unwilling to give it to him. Timid spirit, timid spirit, put away the thought that he is unwilling to save. It is a lie against thy own soul; it is a libel against his character. What! He unwilling to distribute that which he so freely bought at so immense a price! Do you see in any one period of his life an unwillingness to save? There might be once a shrinking of the flesh, but that is over now. No more the crown of thorns; the cross and nails no more. The flesh has nothing more to shrink at. It is done; redemption is accomplished, and think you he was so earnest and so intent on the work of redemption, and now is unwilling to reap the fruits of it? Why, do you not know, poor penitent, that he died to save you, and think you that it needs much argument to move the heart that once was pierced to pity and compassion? Scout the thought once for all. He is able to forgive; that thou knowest. He is as willing as he is able. Infinite is his ability, and as infinite his willingness. I beseech thee, distrust him not. Come as thou art, with all thy sins about thee. Come, now and put thy trust in him. Thou shalt find the door of heaven's gate not creaking on its hinges, but standing on jar and opening easily. John Bunyan says the posts of the gates of the temple were made of olive tree; and he allegorized it thus:--They were made of that fat and oily tree, that so the hinges might move readily and smoothly, that there might be no difficulty in opening the temple-gates when timid souls came flying in. When mothers are unwilling to receive their children, when fathers are unwilling to give

food to their own offspring, then--nay, not even then, will Jesus be unwilling to forgive. When the hard-working man is unwilling to take his wage, when the toiling politician is unwilling to grasp the honor which he has achieved, then--nay, not even then, may Christ be unwilling to lay hold upon the sheep which is his own purchased with his own blood, and to pluck that jewel from a dung-hill which he has redeemed with his own suffering. He is not unwilling; thou art unwilling. If there be any hardness of heart, it lies with thee, and not with him. If there be difficulties in the way of thy salvations they are difficulties in thyself, not in him. Come and welcome. This is the invitation which reaches thee to day from heaven's festal board. Come and welcome. Come and welcome. Come and welcome, sinner, come! Let nothing make thee linger. He thirsts to save; he pants to bless. He longs to redeem and ransom. Only trust him; and if thou be made glad when thou trustest, he will be glad too. If the prodigal is glad when he returns, the father's joy is not an atom less. If there be mirth in the heart of the returning one, there is as much mirth in the heart of the parent to whom he returns. So come, and make thy Savior glad. Come and make him see of the travail of his soul that he may be abundantly satisfied. This is my first practical inference.

There is yet another. Christian men, it is but fair that we should give you one lesson from such a subject as this. Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus. I would not be censorious, but solemnly and seriously, I fear there are not very many whose whole heart is set on Christ's glory. We have church members, men of wealth; do they not spend more upon themselves than upon Christ? And may I not infer from this that they love themselves better than Christ? We have other members of our churches, men who are but comparatively well-to-do. These spend more on their mere pleasures than on Christ. What am I to

suppose, but that they find more pleasure in the enjoyments of the flesh than they do in serving Christ? Oh, have we not tens of thousands in the army of the Lord, that strike for themselves in their own battles with an arm as strong as that of king Arthur of our table, but when they come to fight for Christ their arm drops nerveless at their side? We have men who are all eye, all ear, all hand in business, but they are blind, and deaf, and impotent when they come into Christ's church. The fact is, we have in too many of our churches the chrysalis of men, but not the real body. They give us their names, but they keep their whole influence for the world. Ah! and is this what Christ deserves of you? Is this the reward of his self-devotion? Do you thus repay him who saved others but could not save himself. And you profess to be a follower of the Lamb, is this your following? An imitator of Jesus, and is this the imitation? Oh, sirs, the likeness is marred and blotted. Ye are poor sculptors indeed, if ye imagine yourselves to be sculptured in the image of Christ. Brothers and sisters, this matter may not seem to be of interest to you, but I feel it to be a subject of the most intense importance to the world that lieth in the wicked one. If we were more like Jesus it would be a happy day for the poor dying sons of men. Oh, if our divided aims could but be exchanged for singleness of heart; if our littleness of zeal could be consumed in the intensity of love to Christ, what better men should we be, and what a happier world would be this. Do you imagine that you are pleasing to God when you are living for fifty aims instead of one? When you bring to Christ your lukewarm love, your lukewarm zeal, do you think he is pleased with you, and that he accepts your offer? Oh, church of Laodicea, thou hast moved from Asia, thou hast come to England, and taken up thy abode in London! Truly might the Lord say to many of our London churches, "You are neither cold nor hot, you are lukewarm, and I

will spue thee out of my mouth." There is nothing God abhors more than our cold Christianity, such as we have in these modern times--a religion which professes to live, but which lives like a gasping, fainting, trembling creature, that is on the verge of death. And you think to shake the world while you are shaking yourself with the ague of your cold indifference! You cry to God, "Arise!" and yet you rise not yourself! You ask a blessing and yet you will not win it! You crave for victory, and yet your swords rust in their scabbards! Out with you, sirs, be rid of this hypocrisy; begin first to ask for singleness of soul, and devotedness of purpose; and when this is given you, then shall there come days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Then shall sinners be converted, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul. But for all this we want the influence of the Holy Spirit, for without that we shall never give our whole hearts up to the sacred mission of winning souls for Christ.

Spirit of the living God! descend upon us now; rest on thy saints, and fill them with love to perishing souls, and rest thou on the sinner, to bring him to this willing Savior, and make him willing in the day of thy power.

Chapter 16

Election and Holiness

A Sermon

(No. 303)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 11th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."--Deuteronomy 10:14-16.

HE WHO PREACHES the whole truth as it is in Jesus will labor under continual disadvantages; albeit, that the grand advantage of having the presence and blessing of God will more than compensate the greatest loss. It has been my earnest endeavor ever since I have preached the Word, never to keep back a single doctrine which I believe to be taught of God. It is time that we had done with the old and rusty systems that have so long curbed the freeness of religious speech. The Arminian trembles to go an inch beyond Arminius or Wesley, and many a Calvinist refers to John Gill or John Calvin, as any ultimate authority. It is time that the systems were broken up, and that there was sufficient grace in all our hearts to believe everything taught in God's Word, whether it was taught by either of these men or not. I have frequently found when I have preached what is called high doctrine, because I found it in my text, that some people have been offended; they could not enjoy it, could not endure it, and went away. They were generally

people who were best gone; I have never regretted their absence. On the other hand, when I have taken for my text some sweet invitation, and have preached the freeness of Christ's love to man; when I have warned sinners that they are responsible while they hear the gospel, and that if they reject Christ their blood will be upon their own heads, I find another class of doubtless excellent individuals who cannot see how these two things agree. And therefore, they also turn aside, and wade into the deceptive miry bogs of Antinomianism. I can only say with regard to them, that I had rather also that they should go to their own sort, than that they should remain with my congregation. We seek to hold the truth. We know no difference between high doctrine and low doctrine. If God teaches it, it is enough. If it is not in the Word, away with it! away with it! but if it be in the Word, agreeable or disagreeable, systematic or disorderly, I believe it. It may seem to us as if one truth stood in opposition to another, but we are fully convinced that it cannot be so, that it is a mistake in our judgment. That the two things do agree we are quite clear, though where they meet we do not know as yet, but hope to know hereafter. That God has a people whom he has chosen for himself, and who shall show forth his praise, we do believe to be a doctrine legible in the Word of God to every man who cares to read that Book with an honest and candid judgment. That, at the same time, Christ is freely presented to every creature under heaven, and that the invitations and exhortations of the gospel are honest and true invitations--not fictions or myths, not tantalisations and mockeries, but realities and facts--we do also unfeignedly believe. We subscribe to both truths with our hearty assent and consent.

Now, this morning it may be that some of you will not approve of what I have to say. You will remember, however, that I do not seek your

approbation, that it will be sufficient for me if I have cleared my conscience concerning a grand truth and have preached the gospel faithfully. I am not accountable to you, nor you to me. You are accountable to God, if you reject a truth; I am accountable to Him if I preach an error. I am not afraid to stand before His bar with regard to the great doctrines which I shall preach to you this day.

Now, two things this morning. First, I shall attempt to set forth God's Election; secondly, to show in practical bearings. You have both in the text. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." And, then, in the second place, its practical bearings, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."

I. In SETTING FORTH ELECTION, I must have you observe, first of all, its extraordinary singularity. God has chosen to himself a people whom no man can number, out of the children of Adam--out of the fallen and apostate race who sprang from the loins of a rebellious man. Now, this is a wonder of wonders, when we come to consider that the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's. If God must have a chosen race, why did he not select one from the majestic orders of angels, or from the flaming cherubim and seraphim who stand around his throne? Why was not Gabriel fixed upon? Why was he not so constituted that from his loins there might spring a, mighty race of angels, and why were not these chosen of God from before the foundations of the world! What could there be in man, a creature lower than the angels, that God should select him rather than the angelic spirits? Why were not the cherubim and seraphim given to Christ? Why did he not take up angels? Why did he not assume their nature, and take them into union with

himself? An angelic body might be more in keeping with the person of Deity, than a body of weak and suffering flesh and blood. There were something congruous if he had said unto the angels, "Ye shall be my sons." But, no! though all these were his own, he passes by the hierarchy of angels, and stoops to man. He takes up an apostate worm, and says unto him, "Thou shalt be my son," and to myriads of the same race he cries, "ye shall be my sons and daughters, by a covenant for ever." "But," saith one, "It seems that God intended to choose a fallen people that he might in them show forth his grace. Now, the angels of course would be unsuitable for this, since they have not fallen." I reply, there are angels that have fallen; there were angels that kept not the first estate, but fell from their dignity. And how is it that these are consigned to blackness of darkness for ever! Answer me, ye that deny God's sovereignty, and hate his election--how is it that angels are condemned to everlasting fire, while to you, the children of Adam, the gospel of Christ is freely preached? The only answer that can possibly be given is this: God wills to do it. He has a right to do as he pleases with his own mercy. Angels deserve no mercy: we deserve none. Nevertheless, he gave it to us, and he denied it them. They are bound in chains, reserved for everlasting fire to the last great day, but we are saved. Before thy sovereignty, I bow, great God, and acknowledge that thou doest as thou widest, and that thou givest no account of thy matters. Why, if there were any reason to move God in his creatures, he would certainly have chosen devils rather than men. The sin of the first of the fallen angels was not greater than that of Adam. It is not the time to enter into that question. I could, if opportunity were needed, prove it to be rather less than greater, if there were degrees in sin. Had the angels been reclaimed, they could have glorified God more than we; they could have sang his praises

louder than we can, clogged as we are with flesh and blood. But passing by the greater, he chose the less, that he might show forth his sovereignty, which is the brightest jewel in the crown of his divinity. Our Arminian antagonists always leave the fallen angels out of the question: for it is not convenient to them to recollect this ancient instance of Election. They call it unjust, that God should choose one man and not another. By what reasoning can this be unjust when they will admit that it was righteous enough in God to choose one race--the race of men, and leave another race--the race of angels, to be sunk into misery on account of sin. Brethren, let us have done with arraigning God at our poor fallible judgment seat. He is good and doeth righteousness. Whatever he doth we may know to be right, whether we can see the righteousness or no.

I have given you, then, some reasons at starting, why we should regard God's Election as being singular. But I have to offer to you others. Observe, the text not only says, "Behold, the heaven, even the heaven of the heavens is the Lord's," but it adds, "the earth also, with all that therein is." Now, when we think that God has chosen us, when you, my brethren, who by grace have put your trust in Christ, read your "title clear to mansions in the skies," you may well pause and say in the language of that hymn--

"Pause, my soul I adore, and wonder!
Ask, O why such love to me?"'

Kings passed by and beggars chosen; wise men left, but fools made to know the wonders of his redeeming love; publicans and harlots sweetly compelled to come to the feast of mercy; while proud Pharisees are suffered to trust in their own righteousness and perish in their vain boastings. God's choice will ever seem in the eyes of unrenewed men to be a very strange one. He has passed over those whom we should have

selected, and he has chosen just the odds and ends of the universe, the men who thought themselves the least likely ever to taste of his grace. Why were we chosen as a people to have the privilege of the gospel? Are there not other nations as great as we have been? Sinful a people as this English nation has manifested itself to be, why has God selected the Anglo-Saxon race to receive the pure truth, while nations who might have received the light with even greater joy than ourselves, still lie shrouded in darkness, and the sun of the gospel has never risen on them? Why, again, I say, in the case of each individual, why is the man chosen who is chosen? Can any answer be given but just the answer of our Savior--"Even so, Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight!"

Yet one other thought, to make God's Election marvellous indeed. God had unlimited power of creation. Now, if he willed to make a people who should be his favourites, who should be united to the person of his Son, and who should reign with him, why did he not make a new race? When Adam sinned, it would have been easy enough to strike the world out of existence. He had but to speak and this round earth would have been dissolved, as the bubble dies into the wave that bears it. There would have been no trace of Adam's sin left, the whole might have died away and have been forgotten for ever. But no! Instead of making a new people, a pure people who could not sin, instead of taking to himself creatures that were pure, unsullied, without spot, he takes a depraved and fallen people, and lifts these up, and that, too, by costly means; by the death of his own Son by the work of his own Spirit; that these must be the jewels in his crown to reflect his glory for ever. Oh, singular choice! Oh, strange Election, My soul is lost in thy depths, and I can only pause and cry, "Oh, the goodness, oh, the mercy, oh, the sovereignty of God's grace."

Having thus spoken about its singularity, I turn to another subject.

Observe the unconstrained freeness of electing love. In our text this is hinted at by the word "ONLY." Why did God love their fathers? Why, only because he did so. There is no other reason. "Only, the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above an people, as it is this day." There was doubtless some wise reason for the Lords acts, for he doeth all things after the counsel of his will, but there certainly could not be any reason in the excellence or virtue of the creature whom he chose. Now, just dwell upon that for a moment. Let us remark that there is no original goodness in those whom God selects. What was there in Abraham that God chose him? He came out of an idolatrous people, and it is said of his posterity--a Syrian ready to perish was thy father. As if God would show that it was not the goodness of Abraham, he says, "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." There was nothing more in Abraham than in anyone of us why God should have selected him, for whatever good was in Abraham God put there. Now, if God put it there, the motive for his putting it there could dot be the fact of his putting it there. You cannot find a motive for a fact in itself, there must be some motive lying higher than anything which can be found in the mere act of God. If God chose a man to make that man holy, righteous, and good, he cannot have chosen him because he was to be good and righteous. It were absurd to reason thus. It were drawing a cause for an effect, and making an effect a cause. If I were to plead that the rose bud were the author of the root, well! I might, indeed, be laughed at. But were I to urge that any goodness in man is the ground of God's choice, when I call to recollection that that goodness is the effect of God's choice, I should be foolish indeed. That which

is the elect cannot be the cause. But what original good is there in any man? If God chose us for anything good in ourselves, we must all be left unchosen. Have we not all an evil heart of unbelief? Have we not all departed from his ways? Are we not all by nature corrupt, enemies to God by wicked works? If he chooses us it cannot be because of any original goodness in us. "But," saith one, "perhaps it may be because of goodness foreseen, God has chosen his people, because he foresees that they will believe and be saved." A singular idea, indeed! Here are a certain number of poor persons, and a prince comes into the place. To some ninety out of the hundred he distributes gold. Some one asks the question, "Why did the prince give this gold to those ninety?" A madman in a corner, whose face ought never to be seen, replies, "He gave it to them because he foresaw that they would have it." But how could he foresee that they would have it apart from the fact that he gave it to them? Now, you say that God gives faith, repentance, salvation, because he foresaw that men would have it. He did not foresee it apart from the fact that he intended to give it them. He foresaw that he would give them grace. But what was the reason that he gave it to them? Certainly, not his foresight. That were absurd, indeed! and none but a madman would reason thus. Oh, Father, if thou hast given me life, and light, and joy, and peace, the reason is known only to thyself; for reasons in myself 1 ne'er can find, for I am still a wanderer from thee, and often does my faith flicker, and my love grow dim. There is nothing in me to merit esteem or give thee delight. It is all by thy grace, thy grace alone that I am what I am. So will every Christian say; so must every Christian indeed confess.

But is it not all idle talk, even to controvert for a single moment, with the absurd idea that man can fetter his Maker. Shall the purpose of the Eternal be left contingent on the will of man? Shall man be

really his Maker's master? Shall free-will take the place of the divine energy? Shall man take the throne of God, and set aside as he pleases all the purposes of Jehovah--compelling him by merit to choose him? Shall there be something that man can do that shall control the motions of Jehovah? It is said by some one that men give free-will to every one but God, and speak as if God must be the slave of men. Ay, we believe that God has given to man a free-will--that we do not deny, but we will have it that God has a free-will also--that, moreover, he has a right to exercise it, and does exercise it; and that no merit of man can have any compulsion with the Creator. Merit, on the one hand, is impossible; and even if we did possess it, it could not be possible that we could possess it in such a degree as to merit the gift of Christ. Remember, if we deserve salvation, man must have virtue enough to merit heaven, to merit union with Jesus, to merit, in fact, everlasting glory. You go back to the old Romish idea, if you once slip your anchor and cut your cable, and talk about anything in man that could have moved the mercy of God. "Well," saith one, "this is vile Calvinism " Be it so, if you choose to call it so. Calvin found his doctrine in the Scriptures. Doubtless he may have also received some instruction from the works of Augustine, but that mighty doctor of grace learned it from the writings of St. Paul; and St. Paul, the apostle of grace, received it by inspiration from Jesus the Lord. We can trace our pedigree direct to Christ himself. Therefore, we are not ashamed of any title that may be appended to a glorious truth of God. Election is free, and has nothing to do with any original goodness in man, or goodness foreseen, or any merit that man can possibly bring before God.

I come to the hardest part of my task this morning--Election in its justice. Now, I shall defend this great fact, that God has chosen men to himself, and I shall regard it from rather a different point of view

from that which is usually taken. My defense is just this. You tell me, if God has chosen some men to eternal life, that he has been unjust. I ask you to prove it. The burden of the proof lies with you. For I would have you remember that none merited this at all. Is there one man in the whole world who would have the impertinence to say that he merits anything of his Maker? If so, be it known unto you that he shall have all he merits; and his reward will be the flames of hell for ever, for that is the utmost that any man ever merited of God. God is in debt to no man, and at the last great day every man shall have as much love as much pity, and as much goodness, as he deserves. Even the lost in hell shall have all they deserve, ay, and woe worth the day for them when they shall have the wrath of God, which will be the summit of their deservings. If God gives to every man as much as he merits, is he therefore to be accused of injustice because he gives to some infinitely more than they merit? Where is the injustice of a man doing as he wills with his own? Has he not a right to give what he pleases? If God is in debt to any, then there would be injustice. But he is indebted to none and if he gives his favors according to his own sovereign will, who is he that shall find fault? Thou hast not been injured; God has not wronged thee. Bring up thy claims, and he will fulfill them to the last jot. If thou art righteous and canst claim something of thy Maker stand up and plead thy virtues, and he will answer thee. Though thou gird up thy loins like a man, and stand before him, and plead thy own righteousness, he will make thee tremble, and abhor thyself, and roll in dust and ashes; for thy righteousness is a lie, and thy best performance but as filthy rags. God injures no man in blessing some. Strange is it that there should be any accusation brought against God, as though he were unjust.

I defend it again on another ground. To which of you has God ever

refused his mercy and love, when you have sought his face? Has he not freely proclaimed the gospel to you all? Doth not his Word bid you come to Jesus? and doth it not solemnly say, "Whosoever will, let him come?" Are you not every Sabbath invited to come and put your trust in Christ? If you will not do it, but will destroy your own souls, who is to blame? If you put your trust in Christ you shall be saved; God will not run back from his promise. Prove him, try him. The moment you renounce sin, and trust in Christ, that moment you may know yourself to be one of his chosen ones, but if you will wickedly put from you the gospel which is daily preached, if you will not be saved, then on your own head be your blood. The only reason why you can be lost is because you would continue in sin and would not cry to be saved therefrom. You have rejected you have put him far from you, and left to yourselves, you will not receive him. "Well, but," saith one, "I cannot come to God." Your powerlessness to come lies in the fact that you have no will to come. If thou wert but once willing thou wouldst lack no power. Thou canst not come, because thou art so wedded to thy lusts, so fond of thy sin. That is why thou canst not come. That very inability of thine is thy crime, thy guilt. Thou couldst come if thy love to evil and self were broken. The inability lies not in thy physical nature but in thy depraved moral nature. Oh! if thou wert willing to be saved! There is the point--there is the point! Thou art not willing, nor wilt thou ever be, till grace make thee willing. But who is to blame because thou art not wining to be saved? None but thyself; thou hast the whole blame. If thou refusest eternal life, if thou wilt not look to Christ, if thou wilt not trust to him, remember thy own will damns thee. Was there ever a man who had a sincere will to be saved in God's way who was denied salvation? No, no, a thousand times NO, for such a man is already taught of God. He who gives will, will not deny power. Inability lies

mainly in the will. When once a man is made willing in the day of God's power, he is made able also. Therefore, your destruction lies at your own door.

Then let me ask another question. You say it is unjust that some should be lost while others are saved. Who makes those to be lost that are lost? Did God cause you to sin? Has the Spirit of God ever persuaded you to do a wrong thing? Has the Word of God ever bolstered you up in your own self-righteousness? No; God has never exercised any influence upon you to make you go the wrong way. The whole tendency of his Word, the whole tendency of the preaching of the gospel. is to persuade you to turn from sin unto righteousness, from your wicked ways to Jehovah.

I say again, God is just. If you reject the Savior proclaimed to you, if you refuse to trust him, if you will not come to him and be saved, if you are lost, God is supremely just in your being lost, but if he chooses to exert the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon some of you, he is surely just in giving the mercy which no man can claim, and so just that through eternal ages there shad never be found anew in his acts but the "Holy, Holy, Holy " God shall be hymned by the redeemed, and by cherubim and seraphim, and even the lost in hell shall be compelled to utter an involuntary bass to that dread song, "Holy Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth."

Having thus tried to defend the justice of Election, I now turn to notice the truth of it. I may possibly have here some godly men who cannot receive this doctrine. Well, my friend, I am not angry with you for not being able to receive it, because no man can receive it unless it is given him from God; no Christian will ever rejoice in it unless he has been taught of the Spirit. But, after all, my brother, if you are a renewed man, you believe it. You are coming up-stairs to controvert with me. Come along, and I will allow you to controvert with

yourself, and before five minutes have passed you will out of your own mouth prove my point. Come, my dear brother, you do not believe that God can justly give to some men more grace than to others. Very well. Let us kneel down and pray together; and you shall pray first. You no sooner begin to pray than you say, "O Lord, be pleased, in thy infinite mercy, to send thy Holy Spirit to save this congregation, and be pleased to bless my relatives according to the flesh." Stop! stop! you are asking God to do something which, according to your theory, is not right. You are asking him to give them more grace than they have got; you are asking him to do something special. Positively, you are pleading with God that he would give grace to your relatives and friends, and to this congregation. How do you make that to be light in your theory? If it would be unjust in God to give more grace to one man than to another, how very unjust in you to ask him to do it! If it is all left to man's free-will why do you beg the Lord to interfere? You cry, " Lord, draw them Lord, break their hearts, renew their spirits." Now, I very heartily use this prayer, but how can you do it, if you think it unrighteous in the Lord to endow this people with more grace than he does the rest of the human race. "Oh!" but you say, "I feel that it is right, and I will ask him." Very well; then, if it is right in you to ask, it must be right in him to give, it must be right in him to give mercy to men, and to some men such mercy that they may be constrained to be saved. You have thus proved my point, and I do not want a better proof. And now, my brother, we will have a song together, and we will see how we can get on there. Open your hymn book, and you sing in the language of your Wesleyan hymn-book,

"Oh, yes, I do love Jesus
Because he first loved me."

There, brother, that is Calvinism. You have let it out again. You love

Jesus because he first loved you. Well, how is it you come to love him while others are left not loving him? Is that to your honor or to his honor? You say, "It is to the praise of grace; let grace have the praise." Very well, brother; we shall get on very well, after all, for, although we may not agree in preaching, yet we agree, you see, in praying and praising. Preaching a few months ago in the midst of a large congregation of Methodists, the brethren were all alive, giving all kinds of answers to my sermon, nodding their heads and erring, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!" "Glory be to God!" and the like. They completely woke me up. My spirit was stirred, and I preached away with an unusual force and vigor; and the more I preached the more they cried, "Amen!" "Hallelujah!" "Glory be to God!" At last, a part of text led me to what is styled high doctrine. So I said, this brings me to the doctrine of Election. There was a deep drawing of breath. "Now, my friends, you believe it," they seemed to say. "No, we don't." But you do, and I will make you sing "Hallelujah!" over it. I will so preach it to you that you will acknowledge it and believe it. So I put it thus: Is there no difference between you and other men? " Yes, yes; glory be to God, glory!" There is a difference between what you were and what you are now? "Oh, yes! oh, yes!" There is sitting by your side a man who has been to the same chapel as you have, heard the same gospel, he is unconverted, and you are converted. Who has made the difference, yourself or God? "The Lord!" said they, " the Lord! glory! hallelujah!" Yes, cried I, and that is the doctrine of Election; that is all I contend for, that if there be a difference the Lord made the difference. Some good man came up to me and said, "Thou'rt right, lad! thou'rt right. I believe thy doctrine of Election; I do not believe it as it is preached by some people, but I believe that we must give the glory to God, we must put the crown on the right head." After all,

there is an instinct in every Christian heart, that makes him receive the substance of this doctrine, even if he will not receive it in the peculiar form in which we put it. That is enough for me. I do not care about the words or the phraseology, or the form of creed in which I may be in the habit of stating the doctrine. I do not want you to subscribe to my creed, but I do want you to subscribe to a creed that gives God the glory of His salvation. Every saint in heaven sings, "Grace has done it;" and I want every saint on earth to sing the same song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, to him be the glory for ever and ever." The prayers, the praises, the experience of those who do not believe this doctrine prove the doctrine better than anything I can say. I do not care to prove it better, and I leave it as it is.

II. We now turn to ELECTION IN ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES. You will see that the precept is annexed to the doctrine: God has loved you above all people that are upon the face of the earth, therefore, "circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiffnecked." It is whispered that Election is a licentious doctrine. Say it out loud, and then I will answer you. Election is a licentious doctrine! How do you prove it? It is my business to prove to you that it is the very reverse. "Well but," cries one, "I know a man that believes in Election and yet lives in sin."Yes, and I suppose that disproves it. So that if I can go through London and find any ragged drunken fellow, who believes a doctrine and lives in sin, the feet of his believing it disproves it. Singular logic, that! I will undertake to disprove any truth in the world if you only give me that to be my rule. Why, I can bring up some filthy, scurvy creature, that doubts the universal bounty of God. Then, I suppose that will disprove it. I might bring up to you some wretch that is lying in sin, who yet believes that if he were to

cry "Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner," from his heart, he would he saved, even though he was on his dying bed; I suppose his believing that, disproves it--does it? No! You know very well, though you use such logic as that against us, you would not use it against yourself. The fact is, that the bad lives or the good lives of some individuals cannot be taken as a proof either for or against any set of doctrines. There are holy men that are mistaken; there are unholy men who receive truth. That may be seen any day by any man who will candidly make the observation. If, however, any one sect were peculiarly full of ungodly professors and hypocrites, then would I admit the force of your argument. But I defy you to the proof. The men that have believed this doctrine have been the wide world over--though perhaps, it is not my place to say it, except that I will glory in it as Paul did--have been the most zealous, most earnest, most holy men. Remember, sirs, ye that scoff at this doctrine. that ye owe your liberties to men who held it. Who carved out for England its liberties? I do not hesitate to give the palm to the strong arms of the Ironsides and the mighty will of Oliver Cromwell. But what made them dash to battle as they did but a firm belief that they were God's chosen ones, and could sweep everything before them, because the Lord their God was with them? It was said in Charles the Second's time that if you wanted to find believers in Arminianism, you could find them in every pot-house; but if you wanted to find those who believed the doctrine of grace you must no into the dungeons where the saints of God were shut up, because of the rigidity of their lives and the peculiar straitness of their conversation. Never were men more heavenly-minded than the Puritans; and what Puritan can you find that holds my other doctrine than that which I preach today? You may find some modern doctor who teaches the reverse, but march through centuries, and with few exceptions, where are the saints who

denied the Election of God? The banner has been passed from one hand to the other. Martyrs died for it! they sealed the truth with their blood.

And this truth shall stand when rolling years shall cease to move; this truth which shall be believed when every error and superstition shall crumble to the dust from which they sprang.

But I come back to my proof. It is laid down as a matter of theory that this doctrine is licentious. We oppose that theory. The fitness of things proves that it is not so. Election teaches that God hath chosen some to be kings and priests to God. When a man believes that he is chosen to be a king, would it be a legitimate inference to draw from it--"I am chosen to be a king, therefore I will be a beggar; I am chosen to sit upon a throne, therefore I will wear rags." Why, you would say, "There would be no argument, no sense in it." But there is quite as much sense in that as in your supposition, that God has chosen his people to be holy, and yet that a knowledge of this fact will make them unholy. No! the man, knowing that a peculiar dignity has been put upon him by God, feels working in his bosom a desire to live up to his dignity. "God has loved me more than others, says he; "then, will I love him more than others. He has put me above the rest of mankind by his sovereign grace, let me live above them: let me be more holy: let me be more eminent in grace than any of them." If there be a man that can misuse the dignity of grace which Christ has given hint, and pervert that into an argument for licentiousness, he is not to be found among us. He must be something less than man, fallen though man be, who would infer, from the fact that he has become a Son of God by God's free grace, that therefore he ought to live like a son of the devil; or, who should say, "Because God has ordained me to be holy, therefore I will be unholy." That were the strangest, oddest, most perverted most abominable reasoning that ever could be used. I do not believe there is

a creature living that could be capable of using it.

Again, not only the fitness of things, but the thing itself proves that it is not so. Election is a separation. God has set apart him that is godly for himself, has separated a people out of the mass of mankind. Does that separation allow us to draw the inference thus:--"God has separated me, therefore, I will live as other men live." No! if I believe that God has distinguished me by his discriminating love, and separated me, then I hear the cry, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you." It were strange if the decree of separation should engender an unholy union. It cannot be. I deny, once for all in the name of all who hold the truth--I deny solemnly, as in the presence of God, that we have any thought that because God has separated us, therefore we ought to go and live as others live. No, God forbid. Our separation is a ground and motive for our separating altogether from sinners. I heard a man say once, "Sir, if I believed that doctrine I should live in sin." My reply to him was this, "I dare say YOU would! I dare say YOU would! " "And why," said he, "should I more than you?" Simply because you are a man, and I trust I am a new man in Christ Jesus. To man that is renewed by grace, there is no doctrine that could make him love sin. If a man by nature be as a swine that wallows in the mire, turn him into a sheep, and there IS no doctrine you can teach that can make him go and wallow in the mire again. His nature is changed. There is a raven transformed into a dove. I will give the dove to you, and you may teach it whatever you like, but that dove will not eat carrion any mine. It cannot endure it: its nature is entirely changed. Here is a lion roarings for its prey. I will change it into a lamb; and I defy you to make that lamb, by any doctrine, go and redden its lips with blood. It cannot do it--its nature is changed. A friend on board the steamboat,

when we were coming across from Ireland, asked one of the sailors, "Would you like a nigger song?" "No," said he, "I do not like such things." "Would you like a dance?" "No," said he, "I have a religion that allows me to swear and be drunk as often as ever I please, and that is never: for I hate all such things with perfect hatred."

Christian men keep from sin because their nature abhors sin. Do not imagine we are kept back from sin because we are terrified with threats of damnation, we have no fear, except the fear of offending our loving Father But we do not want to sin--our thirst is for holiness and not for vice. But if you have a kind of religion that always keeps you in restraint, so that you say, "I should like to go to the theater to-night if I dare,"--if that is what you say, depend upon it, your religion is not of much value. You must have a religion that makes you hate the thing you once loved, and love that which you once hated--a religion that draws you out of your old life and puts you into a new life. Now, if a man has a new nature, what doctrine of Election can make that new nature act contrary to its instincts? Teach the man what you will, that man will not turn again to vanity. The Election of God gives a new nature: so, even if the doctrine were dangerous, the new nature would keep it in check.

But once more, bring me hither the man--man shall I call him?--bring me the beast or devil that would say, "God has set his love upon me from before all worlds; my name is on Jesus' heart; he bought me with his blood; my sins are all forgiven; I shall see God's face with joy and acceptance, therefore, I hate God, therefore I live in sin." Bring me up the monster, I say, and when you have brought up such-an-one, even then I will not admit that there is reason in that vile lie, that damnable calumny, which you have cast upon this doctrine, that it makes men live in licentiousness. There is no truth that can so nerve a man

to piety as the fact that he was chosen of God ere time begun. Loved by thee with an unlimited love that never moves, and that endures to the end--O my God! I desire to spend myself in thy service,

"Love, so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all,"

and gratitude to God, for this rich mercy constrains us, compels us to walk in the fear of God, and to love and serve him all our lives.

Now, two lessons, and then I will send you away.

The first lesson is this: Christian men and women, chosen of God and ordained unto salvation, recollect that this is a doctrine everywhere spoken against. Do not hide it, do not conceal it, for remember Christ has said, "He that is ashamed of my words, of him will I be ashamed." But take care that you do not dishonor it. Be ye holy, even as he is holy. he has called you; stand by your calling, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Put on as the elect of God, bowels of compassion, holiness and love, and let the world see that God's chosen ones are made by grace the choicest of men, who live nearer to Christ, and are more like Christ, than and other people upon the face of the earth. And let me add to you, if the world sneers at you, you can look your enemy in the face and never tremble. For this is a degree of nobility, a patent of divine dignity which you never need blush for but which will keep you from ever being a coward, or bowing your knee before pomp and station, when they are associated with vice. This doctrine has never been liked, because it is a hammer against tyrants. Men have chosen their own elect ones, their kings, dukes, and earls, and God's election interferes with them. There are some that will not bow the knee to Baal, who hold themselves to be God's true aristocracy, who will not resign their consciences to the dictation of another. Men rail, and rave, and rage because this doctrine makes a good man strong

in his loins, and will not let him bend his knee, or turn back and be a coward. Those Ironsides were made mighty because they held themselves to be no mean men. They bowed before God, but before men they, could not and would not bow. Stand fast, therefore, in this your liberty, and be not moved from the hope of your calling.

One other word of exhortation; it is the second lesson. There are some of you who are making an excuse out of the doctrine of Election, an excuse, an apology for your own unbelieving and wicked hearts. Now remember the doctrine of Election exercises no constraint whatever upon you. If you are wicked you are so because you will be so. If you reject the Savior you do so because you will do so. The doctrine does not make you reject him. You may make it an excuse, but it is an idle one; it is a cobweb garment that will be rent away at the last day. I beseech you lay it aside, and remember that the truth with which you have to do is this, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." If you believe, you are saved. If you trust Christ, be you who you may, or what you may, the wide world over, you are a saved man. Do not say, "I will not believe because I do not know whether I am elected." You cannot know that until you have believed. Your business is with believing. "Whosoever"--there is no limitation in it--"Whosoever believeth in Christ shall be saved." You, as well as any other man. If you trust Christ, your sins shall be forgiven, your iniquities blotted out. O may the Holy Spirit breathe the new life into you. Bowing the knee, I beseech you, kiss the Son lest he be angry. Receive his mercy now, steel not your hearts against the gracious influence of his love; but yield to him, and you shall then find that you yielded because he made you yield; that you come to him because he drew you; and that he drew you because he had loved you with an everlasting love.

May God command his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 17

Memento Mori

A Sermon

(No. 304)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 18th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."--Deuteronomy 32:29.

MAN IS UNWILLING to consider the subject of death. The shroud, the mattock and the grave, he labors to keep continually out of sight. He would live here always if he could; and since he cannot, he at least will put away every emblem of death as far as possible from his sight. Perhaps there is no subject so important, which is so little thought of. Our common proverb that we use is just the expression of our thoughts, "We must live." But if we were wiser we should alter it and say, "We must die." Necessity for life there is not; lift is a prolonged miracle. Necessity for death there certainly is, it is the end of all things. Oh that the living would lay it to heart. Some years ago, a celebrated author--Drelincourt, wrote a work on Death, a valuable work in itself, but it commanded no sale whatever. There were no men who would trouble themselves with Death's heads and cross-bones. And to show how foolish man is, a certain doctor went home and wrote a silly ghost-story, not one word of which was true, sent it to the bookseller, he stitched it up with his volume, and the whole edition sold. Any thing men will think of rather than death--any fiction, any lie. But this stern reality, this master truth, he puts away, and will not suffer it to enter his thoughts. The old Egyptians were wiser than

we are. We are told that at every feast, there was always one extraordinary guest that sat at the head of the table. He ate not, he drank not, he spake not, he was closely veiled. It was a skeleton which they had placed there, to warn them that even in their feastings, they should remember there would be an end of life. We are so fond of living, so sad at the very thoughts of death, that such a memento mori; as that, would be quite unbearable in our days of feasting. Yet our text tells us that we should be wise, if we would consider our latter end. And certainly we should be, for the practical effect of a true meditation upon death would be exceedingly healthful to our spirits. It would cool that ardor of covetousness, that fever of avarice, always longing after, and accumulating wealth, if we did but remember that we should have to leave our stores, that when we have gotten our most, all that we can ever inherit for out body is one six feet of earth, and a mouthful of clay. It would certainly help us to set loose by the things which we here possess. Perhaps, it might lead us to set our affections upon things above, and not upon the mouldering things below. At any rate, thoughts of death might often check us when we are about to sin. If we look at sin by the light of that death's lantern by which the sexton shall dig our graves, we might see more of the hollowness of sinful pleasure, and of the emptiness of worldly vanity. If we would but sin on our coffin lids, we should sin far more seldom. Surely we should be kept back from many an evil act if we remembered that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And, mayhap too, these thoughts of death might be blessed to us in even a higher sense, for we might hear an angel speaking to us from the grave, "Prepare to meet your God," and we might be led to go home and set our house in order, because we must die and not live. Certainly, if even one of these effects shall be produced by considering our latter end, it would be

the purest wisdom continually to walk arm in arm with that skeleton teacher--Death.

I propose this morning, as God shall help me, to lead you to consider your latter end. May the Holy Spirit bend your thoughts downward to the tomb. May he guide you to the grave, that you may there see the end of all earthly hopes, of all worldly pomp and show. In doing this, I shall thus divide my subject. First, let us consider Death, secondly, let us push on the consideration by considering the warnings which Death has given us already; and then, further, let us picture ourselves as dying,--bringing to our mind's eye a picture of ourselves stretched upon our last bed.

I. In the first place, then, LET US CONSIDER DEATH.

1. Let us begin by remarking its origin. Why is it that I must die? Whence came these seeds of corruption that are sown within this flesh of mine? The angels die not. Those pure ethereal spirits live on without knowing the weakness of old age, and without suffering the penalties of decay. Why must I die? Why has God made me so curiously and so wondrously--why is all this skill and wisdom shown in the fashioning of a man that is to endure for an hour, and then to crumble back to his native element--the dust? Can it be that God originally made me to die? Did he intend that the noble creature, who is but a little lower than the angels, who hath dominion over the works of God's hands, beneath whose feet he hath put all sheep and oxen, yea and the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea--did he intend that that creature should waste away as a shadow, and should be as a dream that continueth not? Come, my soul, let this melancholy thought thrust itself upon thy attention. Thou diest because thou sinnest! Thy death is not God's primal ordinance, but it is a penalty brought upon thee on account of the

transgression of thy first parent. Thou wouldst have been immortal if Adam had been immaculate. Sin, thou art the mother of Death! Adam thou hast digged the graves of thy children! We might have lived on, in everlasting youth, if it had not been for that thrice-cursed theft of the forbidden fruit. Look, then, that thought in the face. Man is a suicide. Our sin, the sin of the human race, slays the race. We die because we have sinned. How this should make us hate sin! How we should detest it because the wages of sin is death! Brand then, from this day forward, the word Murderer on the brow of sin.

2. In considering Death, let us go a step further, and observe not only its origin but its certainty. Die I must. I may have escaped a thousand diseases, but Death has an arrow in his quiver that will reach my heart at last. True, I have one hope, a blissful hope, that if my Lord and Master shall soon come, I shall be among the number of them that are alive and remain, who shall never die, but who shall be changed. I have that fond anticipation, that he will come ere this body of mine shall crumble into dust, and that these eyes shall see him when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. But, however, if it be not so, die I must. "It is appointed unto All men once to die, end after death the judgment. Run! run! but the beet pursuer shall overtake thee. Like the stag before the hounds we By swifter than the breeze, but the dogs of Death shall outstrip us: Fever and plague, weakness and decay; he hath but to let slip these dogs and they are on us, and who can resist their fury? There is a black camel upon which Death rides, say the Arabs, and that must kneel at every man's door. With impartial hand he dashes down the palace of the monarch as well as the cabin of the peasant. At every man's door there hangs that black knocker, and Death hath but to uplift it and the dread soumd is heard, and the uninvited guest sits down to banquet on our flesh and blood. Die I must. No

physician can stretch out my life beyond its allotted term. I must cross that river Jordan. I may use a thousand stratagems, but I cannot escape. Even now I am today like the deer surrounded by the hunters in a circle, a circle which is narrowing every day; and soon must I fan and pour out my life upon the ground. Let me never forget, then, that while other things are uncertain, Death is sure.

3. Then, looking a little further into shade, let me remember the time of my Death. To God it is fixed and certain. He has ordained the hour in which I must expire. A thousand angels cannot keep me from the grave an instant when that hour has struck. Nor could legions of spirits cast me into the pit before the appointed time.

"Plagues and death around me fly,
Till he please I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.

All our times are in his hand. The means, the way I shall die, how long I shall be in dying, the sickness and in what place I shall be seized with the contagion, Al these are ordained. God hath in his mind's eye the wave that shall engulph me, or the bed in which I shall breathe out my last. He knows the stones that shall mark my sleeping place, and the very worm that shall crawl o'er this face when it shall be cold im death. He hath ordained everything; and in that Book of Fate it stands, and never can it be changed. But to me it is quite uncertain. I know not when, nor where, nor how I shall breathe out my life. Into that sacred ark I cannot look--that ark of the secrets of God. I cannot pry between the folded leaves of that book which is chained to the throne of God, wherein is written the whole history of man. When I walk by the way I man fall dead im the streets; an apoplexy may usher me into the presence of my Judge. Riding along the road, I may be carried as

swiftly to my tomb. While I am thinking of the multitudes of miles over which the fiery wheels are rimming, I may be in a minute, without a moment's warning, sent down to the shades of death. In my own house I am not safe. There are a thousand gates to Death, and the roads from Earth to Hades are innumerable. From this spot in which I stand there is a straight path to the grave; and where you sib there is an entrance into eternity. Oh, let us bethink, then, how uncertain life is. Talk we of a hair; it is something massive when compared with the thread of life. Speak we of a spider's web, it is ponderous compared with the web of life. We are but as a bubble; nay, less substantial. As a moment's foam upon the breaker, such are we. As an instant spray--nay, the drops of spray are enduring as the cabs of heaven compared with the moments of our life. Oh, let us, then, prepare to meet our God, because, when and how we shall appear before him is quite unknown to us. We may never go out of this hall alive. Some of us may be carried hence on young men's shoulders, as Ananias and Sapphire of old. We may not live to see our homes again We may have given the last kiss to the beloved, cheek, and spoken the last ward of fondness to those who are near to our hearts. We are on the brink of our tombs,

"Ten thousand to their endless home
This solemn moment fly;
And we are to the margin come,
And soon expect to die!"

4. But I must not linger here, but go on to observe the terrors which surround Death. I would call to your memory to-day the pains, the groans the dying strife, which make our affrighted souls start back from the tomb. To the best men in the world dying is a solemn thing. Though "I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies," and know that I have a portion among them that are sanctified, yet must it

always give some trembling to the flesh, some quivering to the human frame, to think of breathing out my soul, and launching on an unknown sea. He that can laugh at death is a fool--stark, staring mad is he. He who can make jokes with regard to his end will find that if he should die jesting, it will be no jest to be damned. When this tent is being taken down, when this clay tenement begins to creak and shake in the rough north wind of Death, when stone after stone tumbles from its place, and all the bonds are loosened, it will be a terrible moment then. When the poor soul stands beneath the temple of the body, and sees it shake, sees rifts in its roof, sees the pillars tremble, and all the ruins thereof falling about it, it will be an awful moment--a moment which, if it were continued and lengthened, would be the most dread picture of hell that can be presented to us, for hell is called the second Death. An endless dying, the pang of death prolonged eternally, the woes and the grief of dissolution made to last without an end, that, I say, is one of the most terrible pictures of hell.

Death itself must be a tremendous thing. Let me think, too that when I die I must leave behind me all that I have on earth. Farewell! to that house which I have so fondly called my home. Farewell! to that preside and the little prattlers that have climbed my knee. Farewell I to her who has shared my life and been the beloved one of my bosom. Farewell! All things--the estate, the "old, the silver. Farewell! earth. Thy fairest beauties melt away, thy most melodious strains die in the dim distance. I hear no more, and see no more, Ears and eyes are closed, and men shall carry me out and bury their dead out of their sight. And, now, farewell! to Al the means of grace. That passing bell is the last sound of the sanctuary that shall toll for me. No church bell now shall summon me to the house of God. If I have neglected Christ I shall hear of Christ no more, No grace presented now; no strivings of the Spirit,

"Fix'd is my everlasting state,

Could I repent, tis now too late."

Death hath now closed up the window" of my soul If I am impenitent, an everlasting darkness, a darkness like that of Egypt, that may be felt, rests on me for over. Ye may sing ye saints of God, but I must howl eternally. Ye may gather round the Sacramental Table and remember your Master's death, but I am cast away for ever from his presence, where there is weeping, and waning, and gnashing of teeth. This is to die, my friends, and to die with a vengeance, too. To the believer there are softening tints; there are lines in the picture which take out the blackness. The very shades help to make the believer's glory brighter, the grim passage of Death makes heaven shine with a superior lustre. He thinks of the lands beyond the flood, of the beatific vision, of the face of the exalted Redeemer, of a seat at his right hand, of crowns of glory, and of harps of immortal bliss. But to you who are ungodly and unconverted, Death has only this black side. It is the leaving of all you have, and of all you love. It is an entering upon eternal poverty, everlasting shame, and infinite woe. Oh that ye were wise, ye careless sinners--oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, and would consider your latter end.

5. I have thus you see pushed into another head which I meant to have dwelt upon for a moment, viz., the results of death. For, verily, its results and terrors to the wicked are the same. Oh that ye were wise to consider them. Let me, however, remind the Christian, in order that there may be a flash of light in the thick darkness of this sermon, that Death to him should never be a subject upon which he should loathe to meditate. To die!--to shake off my weakness and to be girded with omnipotence. To die!--to leave my pangs, and palms, and fears, and woe, my feeble heart, my unbelief, my tremblings and my griefs, and leap

into the divine bosom. To die! What have I to lose by Death? The tumult of the people and the strife of tongues. A joyous loss indeed! To the believer Death is gain, unalloyed gain. Do we leave our friends by Death? We shall see better friends, and more numerous up yonder, in the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Do we leave our house and comforts?" There is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Do we lose our life? Ah no, we gain a better far; for remember that we live to die, we die to live, and then are live to die no more. Without any fraction of loss, death to the believer is a glorious gain. It is greatly wise, then, for a Christian to talk with his last hours, because those last hours are the beginning of his glory. He leaves off to sin and begins to be perfect; he ceases to suffer and begins to be happy; he renounces all his poverty and shamed and begins to be rich and honored. Comfort, then, comfort, then, ye sorrowing and suffering Christians. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Say unto them your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, and you shall see your Lord's face without A veil between.

II. I shall now turn to the second head of my discourse. Brethren, fellow immortals. I desire you now to CONSIDER THE WARNINGS WHICH DEATH HATH ALREADY GIVEN TO EACH ONE OF US. We are so prone to turn away from this subject, that you must excuse me if I continue to bring you back again, again, and again to it, alluring the brief time that can be allotted to the discourse of this morning. Death hath been very near to many of us; he has crossed the ecliptic of our life many and many a time. That baleful planet has often been in close conjunction with us. Let us just observe how frequently he has been in our house. Call ye then to mind, first of Al, how many warnings you have had in the loss of relatives. There is not a person here, I imagine who has not had to

make a pilgrimage to the tomb, to weep over the ashes of your friends. During the few years that I have been the pastor of this church, how many times have I journeyed to the tomb. One after another of the valiant men in our Israel have been taken away. Many who were my spiritual sons and daughters, whom I buried first in the tomb of baptism, have I had to bury afterwards in the tomb of death. The scene is always changing. As I stand in my pulpit, I remark many an old familiar face. But I have to observe also, how many places there are which would have been empty, if it were not that God has sent other Davids to occupy David's seat. And, my dear friends, it cannot be long with some of you ere it shall be my mournful task, unless I die myself, to go creeping over your bodies to the tomb. That funeral oration may soon be pronounced over some of you. And you have good reason to expect it when you think how one after another of those who were the friends of your youth have gone. Where is the wife with whom you lived joyously in the early days of your life? Or where is the husband whose fair young face so often looked on you with eyes of love? Where are those children who sprung up like flowers, but withered as they bloomed? Where are those brothers and those sisters, the elder born, that have crossed the flood before us? or, where those younger ones, whom we lived to see born, who shone with us for an hour, but whose sun even before it had reached its zenith, had set in eternal night? Brothers and sisters, Death has made sad inroads into some of our families. There be some of you who stand to day like a man upon the shore when the tide is swelling towards his feet. There came one wave, and it took away the grandmother; another came, and a mother was swept away; another came, and the wife was taken; and now it dashes at your feet. How long shall it be ere it break over you--and you, too, are carried away by the yawning wave into the bosom of the deep of Death? The Lord

has given many of you serious and solemn warnings. I do entreat you, listen to them. Darken now, to the cry which comes up from the grave of those who being dead yet speak to you. Hear them now, those lately buried ones, as they cry, "Children, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, prepare to meet your God, lest ye should fail in the lest dread day."

Think, again, what solemn and repeated warnings we have had of late, not in our families, but in the wide, wide world. It is a singular fact, that afflictions and accidents never come alone. A few weeks ago, we were all shocked with the news, that one who sailed across the treacherous sea full many a time, and who at last had risen so high in his profession as to become captain of the largest vessel that was ever launched upon the deep, that he had suddenly perished in calm craters, and his spirit had appeared before his God. It seemed to us to be a sad thing, that one who had endured the tempest and the storm, perhaps a thousand times, should sink as a ship that founders in mid-ocean, when not a wave rocks her keel. He is at home--he has just left his family--his foot slips, and he finds a watery grave. Quick upon that, as one messenger follows anther, came the news across the sea of the falling of a mill, in which so many hundreds were at once overwhelmed by the ruins, and sent hurriedly into the presence of God. We can little tell what a thrill of horror went through the towns which are adjacent to that mill in America. Even ourselves, across leagues of the sea, felt stunned by the blow, when so large a number of our fellow-creatures were hurried from this state of being into another. Immediately after that, there came another calamity, which is just fresh in our memory. A train is whirling along, and suddenly the iron horse leaps from his road, and men who are talking together, as fully at ease as we are, amid the breaking of bones, and the crashing of

timber, and whirlwinds of dust and steam, are snatched from time into eternity. And, now, this last week, how many tokens have we had that man is mortal? A judge who has lone presided over the trials of his criminal countrymen, delivers his charge before a grand jury. He delivers it with his usual wisdom, calmness, and deliberation. He has finished; he pauses; he lifts the smelling bottle to his nose to refresh himself; he falls back; he is carried from the court to receive his own charge, to go from the judgment-seat on which he sat to the judgment-seat before which he must himself stand. Then, in the same week, a good man who has served his day and generation in a sister church of this city, is suddenly snatched away from before us. He who aided every good cause, and served his day and generation--perhaps you may know that I allude to Mr. Corderoy--is suddenly taken away, and leaves a whole denomination mourning over him. Nay, nearer than that has the stroke of death come to some of us. It was but last Wednesday that I sat in the house of that mighty servant of God, that great defender of the faith, the Luther of his age, Dr. Campbell; we were talking then about these sudden deaths, tattle thinking that the like calamity would invade his very family; but, alas! we observed in the next day's paper, that his second son had been swept overboard in returning from one of his voyages to America. A bold brave youth has found a liquid grave. So that here, there, everywhere, O Death! I see thy doings. At home, abroad, on the sea, and across the sea, thou art doing marvels. O thou mower! how long ere thy scythe shall be quiet? O thou destroyer of men, wilt thou never rest, wilt thou ne'er be still? Death I must thy Juggernaut-car go crashing on for ever, and must the skulls and blood of human beings mark thy track? Yes, it must be so till He comes who is the King of life and immortality; then the saints shall die no more, but be as the angels of God. So then, Death has

spoken very loudly to us as a nation, as a people, and has spoken to many of us, very loudly, in our own family circles.

Now, man, I will come closer home to you still. Death has given home strokes to all of us. Put thy finger in thy own mouth, for thou hast Death's mark there. What mean those decaying teeth, those twitching pains of the gum?--an agony despised by those alone who feel It not. Why do some parts of the house tremble and hurry to decay? Because the rottenness that is in the teeth is in the whole body. You talk of a decayed tooth: remember, it is but part of a decayed man. You are yourself rotting, but a little less rapidly. For, to some of you, what warnings Death has given. He has laid his cold hand upon your head and frozen your hair; and there it lies in snowy flakes upon your temples. Or, perhaps, he has put that hand yet more heavily upon it, and now your bare head is exposed to the rays of the sun, and, remember, this is but a type of the exposure of your bare soul to the stroke of death. What signs have we all had in our bodies, especially the aged, the infirm, the consumptive, and the maimed? What mean those lungs that are so soon exhausted of their breathing if you travel up a flight of stairs to your bed? Why is it you need your optic glasses to your eyes, but that they that look out of the windows are darkened? Why that affected hearing? Why that failure of the voice, that weakness of the entire body, that accumulation of the flesh, or that prominence of the bones and leanness of the body? What are all these but stabs from the hand of Death? They are, if I may say so, his warrants which he presents to you, summons you in a little time to meet him in another place, to do your last work, and take your last farewell. Oh! if we would but look at ourselves, we bear Death's signs and tokens about us in every part of our body. But some of us have had yet more solemn warnings than these. If these suffice not, Death gives us a more

thundering sermon. It is but a little while ago with me since Death with his axe seemed to be felling my tree. How the chips flew about me and covered the ground! It is a marvel to myself that I am here. Brought to Death's door, till the mind became distracted, and the body weakened, so that one could scarce stand upright, and yet again recovered.

"Tell it unto sinners--tell,
I am, I am, out of hell."

Still spared, and yet alive. You have had fever, cholera it may be. You have hen stretched on your bed time after time; and each time the branch has creaked and bent almost double, till we have said, "Surely, it must snap." As a bowing wall have we been, and as a tottering fence; down it must come, so we thought; for a rough hand was shaking it, and moving us to and fro. There was not a pillar that stood firm. There was not a beam or rafter that did not quiver. We said, in the bitterness of our soul, "My days are cut off, and I shall go down to my tomb before my time." Well, man, and yet you are living in sin, as careless and unconcerned as you were before. Remember, if you will not hear Death's tongue you shall feel his dart. If you will not think of God when he gives you a warning from a distance, you shall be made to feel God, for " he shall tear you in pieces, and none shall deliver." Methinks I see this morning, Death fitting his arrow to the bow. He is drawing it, pulling it tighter, and tighter still; and the marvel is that he can hold the arrow in his hand so long. "Shall it fly?" saith Death; "shall I let fly at yon wretch's heart? he will not repent; let me cut him off, and send him to his destruction." But the Lord saith, "Spare him yet a tattle longer." But, anon, Death's fingers are itching. He saith, "My Lord, let me take aim; I have bent my bow, and made it ready. So sharp is it that it would cut through bars of brass, or triple steel,

to reach a human heart. My throat is thirsting after his blood. Oh, let me lay him; let him die." "No," cries the longsuffering voice of God; " spare him, spare him, spare him yet a little longer." But the time will soon arrive. Perhaps, ere that clock shall reach the half hour, it may he said in heaven, "Time is! Time was!" And then shall Death let fly; his arrow shall reach your heart; and you, fading down on earth, shall appear before the awful Judge of the quick and the dead, and receive your final sentence. And, good God, if you are unprepared to die! O careless sinner, what then will become of thee?

I have thus tried to make you think of Death's warnings in the loss of friends, and the deaths of many abroad; moreover in the failing of our bodies, and in the diseases which have begun to prey upon us.

III. And now to conclude, will you in the last place, PICTURE YOURSELF AS DYING NOW. Antedate for a very little while your last day. Suppose it to have come. The sun has risen. "Throw up that window! let me see that sun for the last time!--this is my last day! " The physicians whisper with one another. You catch some syllables, and you learn the sad news that the case is hopeless. Much has been done for you, but skill has its limit. "He may survive," says the physician, "perhaps another twelve hours, but I hardly expect it will be so long as that. You had better gather his friends together to see him. Telegraph for the daughter; let her come up and see her father's face for the last time in the world." Yes, and now I begin to feel that the hour is coming. They are gathering round my bed. "Farewell! to you all, a last farewell! A father bids you follow him upwards to the skies. I know that my Redeemer liveth.' My hope stands fast and firm in Christ Jesus! Farewell! Farewell! I commend you to him who is the Father of the fatherless and the husband of the widow." But the hour draws nearer still. And now the lips refuse to speak. We have a something to

communicate--a last word to a wife. We mutter through our closed teeth, but no audible sounds are heard, no words that can be interpreted. We breathe heavily. They stay us up in the bed with pillows. And now we begin to understand that expression of the hymn, "The cracking of the eyestrings." Now, we cannot see. Strange to say, we have eyes still, but we cannot see. If we want anything we must feel about us for it; but, no, we cannot lift our hands. They begin to hang down. We can still hear, and we hear the whisper the question, "Is he dead?" One of them says, " I think there is still a little breath." They come very near and try to hear us breathing. That can hardly be heard. What must our sensations be in that solemn moment! There is a hush now in the room. The watch alone is heard ticking, as the last sands drop from the hour glass. And now, the last moment is come. My soul is severed from my body. And where am I now--a naked, disembodied spirit? My soul, if thy hope be sound and real, thou art now where thou hast longed to be; thou art in the presence of thy Savior and thy God. Thou art now brother to the angels. Thou standest in the mid-blaze of the splendor of divinity. Thou seest Him, whom having not seen, thou hast loved; in whom believing, thou hast rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Ah, but there is another picture, the reverse of this, I cannot attempt to draw it, I will give you but the rough outline of it--a crayon sketch without the filling up. Yes, you are dying; and bad as you have been, you have some that love you, and they gather round you. You cannot speak to them. Alas! you tell them more than if you could speak, for they see in your face that clammy sweat, those staring eyes. They see tokens that you have a vision of a something which would not bear to be revealed. You try to be composed; you quiet yourself. The doctor assists you to be damned easily: he drugs you, helps to send you to

sleep. And now you feel that you are expiring. Your soul is filled with terror. Black horrors and thick darkness gather round you. Your eyestrings break. Your flesh and your heart fail. But there is no kind angel to whisper, "Peace, be still." No convoy of cherubim to bear your soul away straight to yonder worlds of joy. You feel that the dart of death is a poisoned dart, that it has injected hell into your veins; that you have begun to feel the wrath of God before you enter upon the state where you shall feel it to the full. Ah, I will not describe what has happened. As your minister it may be, I shall have to come up and see you in your last extremity, and I shall have to say to the mother, to the children, to your brothers and to your sisters, "Well, well, we must leave this in the hands of a Covenant God." I must speak as gently as I can, but I shall go away with the reflection: "O that he had been wise, that he had understood this, that he had considered his latter end." My heart, as I go down the stairs, shall ask me this question, "Was I faithful to this man? did I tell him honestly the way to heaven? if he is lost, will his blood be required at my hands?" I know that with regard to some of you the answer of my conscience will be, "I have preached as well as I possibly could the Word of God, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with a desire to be simple and to come home to the heart. I must leave the matter there. If they are lost, oh, horror of horrors! but I am clear of their blood." Ah, my hearers, I hope it will not be so with you, but that each one of you, dying, may have a hope; and rising again may possess immortality, and ascend to the throne of my Father and of your Father, to my God and to your God. And, now, if there is any impression upon your minds, any serious thought, let me send you away with this one sentence. The way of salvation is plain: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damped." Believe--that is, trust--trust

the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved. My God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust him now, for with some of you--and mark this last sentence--with some of you it is NOW or NEVER.

Chapter 18

Separating the Precious From the Vile

A Sermon

(No. 305)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 25th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"That ye may know how that the Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel,"--Exodus 11:7.

THE DIFFERENCE between the Egyptians and Israel was exceedingly manifest. At first sight it seemed to be very greatly to the advantage of Egypt. They had the whip in their hand, and poor Israel smarted under the lash. Egypt possessed the toil of the Israelites. the sons of Jacob made bricks, and the subjects of Pharaoh inhabited the houses which the sons of Jacob builded. How soon, however, were the tables turned! God wrought plagues in Egypt. but Goshen was spared. He sent a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt; but in all the land of Goshen there was light. He sent all manner of flies and lice in all their borders, but throughout the habitations of Israel not a fly was to be seen, neither were they molested by the living things which crept upward from the quickened dust of the earth. The Lord sent hail and a murrain upon all the cattle of the Egyptians; but the cattle of the children of Israel were spared, and on their fields fell no desolating shower from heaven. At last the destroying angel unsheathed his glittering sword to smite his last decisive blow. In every house throughout the land of Egypt there was weeping and wailing, he smote the firstborn of Egypt, the chief of all their strength; but as for his people, he led them forth like sheep, he led them through

the wilderness like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. They came to the Red Sea, and he divided a path for them they went through the sea on foot, there did they rejoice in Him. The flood; stood upright as a heap land the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea. They passed through the depths as through a wilderness, which the Egyptians essaying to do were drowned. The Lord, in all these things, put a glorious difference between Egypt and Israel. The fiery cloudy pillar which gave light to Israel was darkness to the eyes of Egypt. Whenever God blessed Israel, he cursed Egypt, the same moment that he sent the benediction to the one, he sent the malediction to the other, he looked on Israel and the tribes rejoiced, but when he looked on the Egyptians, their host were troubled.

Now, in your ears this day, Egypt and Israel are declared to be types of two people who dwell upon the face of the earth,--the men that fear the Lord and the men that fear him not. The Egyptians are the pictures of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to God by wicked works, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The Israelites, God's ancient people, are set before us as the representatives of those who have through grace believed in Christ, who fear God and who seek to keep his commandments. The task of this morning will be to show you, first, the difference; secondly, when that difference is seen; and thirdly, the reason why it should be seen, upon which last point I shall stir up your minds, urging you to make the difference more and more conspicuous in your daily life.

I. First, then, THE DIFFERENCE. The Lord hath put a difference between those who are his people and those who are not.

There are many distinctions among men which will one day be blotted out; but permit me to remind you at the outset that this is an eternal distinction. Between the different classes of men, the rich and the

poor, there are channels of intercommunication, and very properly so, for the less class distinctions are maintained, the better for the happiness of all. The social fabric is not to be kept up by maintaining one pillar at the expense of another, or by gilding the roof and neglecting the foundations. The commonwealth is one, and the prosperity of one class is proportionally the prosperity of all. But there distinction so wide that we may truly say of it, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed," and the broader the line of demarcation, the happier for the church, and the better for the world. There is a distinction of infinite width between the sinner dead in sin, and the child of God quickened by the Spirit, who has been adopted into the family of the Most High. Concerning this distinction, suffer me to make, the following remarks.

First, the distinction between the righteous and wicked is most ancient. It was ordained of God from before the foundation of the world. In the eternal covenant Jehovah wrote the names of his elect; for them Christ entered into engagements that he would be their surety, and their substitute to suffer in their room and stead. Covenant engagements were made for them, and for them only. Their names were from of old inscribed in the book of God, and engraven upon the precious stones of their great high priest's breastplate. They were then in the covenant set apart: "The Lord hath set apart him that his godly for himself." While the whole world lay in the wicked one, these precious jewels were selected from the dunghill of the fall. Better than other men by nature they certainly were not; yet divine sovereignty, linked arm in arm with divine grace, selected some to be the vessels of mercy, who should be fitted for the Master's use, in whom Jehovah should show forth not his long suffering merely, but the plenitude of his grace and the riches of his love. Other distinctions

are merely temporary. they are things that grew up yesterday, and will die to-morrow. but this is older than the everlasting hills. Before the starry sky was spread, or the foundations of the earth were digged, the Lord had made a difference between Israel and Egypt. This, however, is a mighty secret, and though we are to tell it as we find it in the Word, yet we are not intrusively to pry into it.

God has made another distinction, namely a vital one. Between the righteous and the wicked, there is an essential distinction of nature. There are some of you, who imagine that the only difference between the true Christian and another, is just this,--that the one is more attentive to his place of worship--that he is more regular in the practice of ceremonies--that he could not live without private prayer, and the like. Permit me to assure you, that if there is no greater difference than this between you and another man, you are not a child of God. The distinction between the unconverted and the converted, is far wider than this. It is one not of dress or of outward form but of essence and of nature. Bring hither a serpent and an angel: there is a distinction between the two of such a character, that the serpent could not grow into an angel let it do its utmost; the angel could not eat the dust which forms the serpent's food, nor could the serpent lift up its voice and sing the seraphic song of the blessed. As wide a distinction as that is there between the man that fears God, and the man that fears him not. If you are still what you always were by nature, you cannot be a true Christian; and it is utterly impossible for you to grow into one by all your doings. You may wash and cleanse, you may clothe and dress; you will be the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of heaven. You must be born again; there must be a new nature put into you; a spark of divinity must fall into your bosom, and must burn there. Fallen nature can only rise to

nature, just as water will only flow up as high as its source; and as you are fallen in nature, so must you remain, unless you are renewed by grace. God by his infinite power has quickened his people: he has brought them out of their old nature, they now love the things which they once hated, and they hate the things they once loved. Old things with them are "passed away; behold all things are become new." The change is not that they speak more solemnly and religiously, or that they have left off going to the theater, or that they do not spend their lives in the frivolities of the world: that is not the change--it is a consequence of it, but the change is deeper and more vital than this; it is a change of the man's very essence. He is no more the man that he once was. he is "renewed in the spirit of his mind," born over again, regenerated, re-created: he is a stranger and a foreigner here below, he no more belongs to this world, but to the world to come. The Lord, then, in this respect, hath put a difference between Israel and Erupt.

We would remark, further, that this difference of nature is followed by a difference in God's judicial treatment of the two men. With both, his dealings are just and right. God forbid that he should be unjust to any man! The Lord is never severe beyond what justice demands, nor gracious beyond what justice allows. Here comes the unrenewed, the ungodly man, he brings up his good works, his prayers, his tears; the Lord will judge him according to his works, and woe worth the day to him; it will be a day of sorrow indeed, for he will soon discover his best perfections are as filthy rags, and that all his good works only seemed to be good because he was in the dark, and could not see the spots that defiled them. Another man approaches, it is the renewed man. God deals with him justly, it is true, but not according to the scale of the law, he looks at that man as accepted in Christ Jesus, justified through

Christ's righteousness and washed in his blood' and now he deals with that man, not as a judge with a criminal, nor as a king with a subject, but as a father with a child. That man is taken to Jehovah's bosom; his offense is put away, his soul constantly renewed by the influence of divine grace, and the dealings of God with him are as different from the dealings of God with another man, as the love of a husband differs from the sternness of an incensed monarch. On the one hand, it is simple justice; on the other hand, fervent love; on the one hand, the inflexible severity of a judge, and on the other hand, the unbounded affection of a parent's heart. The Lord, then, in this also hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

This distinction is carried out in providence. It is true, that to the naked eye one event happens to both; the righteous suffer as well as the wicked, and they go to the grave which is appointed for all living; but if we could look more closely into God's providence, we should see lines of light dividing the path of the godly from the lot of the transgressor. To the righteous man every providence is a blessing. A blessing is wrapped up in all our curses and in all our crosses. Our cups are sometimes bitter, but they are always healthful. Our woe is our weal. We are never losers by our losses, but we grow rich towards God when we become poor towards men. To the sinner, however, all things work together for evil. Is he prosperous? He is as the beast that is fattened for the slaughter. Is he healthy? He is as the blooming flower that is ripening for the mower's scythe. Does he suffer? His sufferings are the first drops of the eternal hail-storm-of divine vengeance.

Every thing to the sinner, if he could but open his eye, hath a black aspect. The clouds are to him big with thunders, and the whole world is alive with terror. If earth could have its way it would shake off from its bosom the monsters that forget God. But to the righteous all things

work together for good. Come foul, or come fair, all shall end well; every wave speeds him to his desired haven, and even the rough blast swells his sails, and drives him the more swiftly towards the port of peace. The Lord hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt in this world.

That difference, however, will come out more distinctly on the judgment-day. Then, when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory, he shall divide them, the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. He shall cry unto his angels, and say, "Gather out of my kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity." Then, with the sharp sickle in his hand, will the angel fly through the midst of heaven and reap the tares, and gather them together in bundles to burn. But, stepping from his throne, not delegating the delightful task to an angel, the King himself, the crowned Reaper, shall take his own golden sickle, and shall gather the wheat into his barn. Oh! then, when hell shall open wide its mouth, and swallow up the impenitent, when they shall go down alive into the pit, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did of old--then, when they shall see the righteous streaming up to heaven, like a stream of light, in their bright and glistering garments, shout triumphant hymns and choral symphonies, then shall it be seen that the Lord hath put a difference. When across the impassable gulf the rich man shall see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom--when from the lowest pit of hell the condemned one shall see the accepted one glorified in bliss--then shall the truth stand out written in letters of fire--"The Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."

II. We pass on to our second point--WHEN IS THIS DIFFERENCE SEEN? Our answer is, it is often seen in God's temple. Two men go up to the temple to worship, they take their seats side by side in God's house;

the Word is preached to them both; they both hear it, perhaps with like attention; the one goes his way to forget, the other remembers. They come again: the one listens, and the minister is to him as one that playeth a goodly tune upon an instrument: the other listens and weeps; he feels that the word is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It comes home to his conscience; it pierces him, cuts him to the quick; every word seems to be as an arrow shot from the bow of God and finding a target in his conscience. And now they come again. The one feels the word at last to be his; he has been led to repentance and faith in Christ through It, and now comes up to sing God's praises as his accepted child; while the other remains to sing as a mere formalist--to join in worship in which he feels hut little interest--to lift up his voice in a prayer when his heart is far absent. If I had here this morning a heap of steel filings and of ashes mixed together, and I wanted to detect the difference between the two, I should have nothing to do but to thrust in a magnet; the filings would be attracted and the ashes would remain. So with this congregation. If I would know to-day who are those who are of God's Israel, and who are still the baseborn Egyptians, there is nothing needed but to preach the gospel. The gospel finds out God's people. it has an affinity to them. When it comes to them they receive it, God's Holy Spirit opening their hearts; they lay hold of it and rejoice in it; while those who are not God's, who have no part or interest in the redemption of Christ, hear it in vain and are even hardened by it and go their way to sin with a higher hand, after all the warnings they have received.

Come now, my hearer--to come right home to you--have you ever seen this difference made between you and another man? Do you hear the gospel now as you have never heard it before? This is the age of hearing; there are more people attending our places of worship now than ever there

were but still it is not the hearers, but the doers of the Word that are blessed. So, then, have you been made to hear the Word as you never heard before? Do you listen to it, hoping that it may be blessed to you, desiring that your conscience may be subjected to it. just as the gold is subject to the goldsmith's hand? If so, there is the first sign of a difference which God has put between you and the Egyptians. But it goes further. If the Israelite is consistent with his duty, as I think he must be, in a little while he feels it incumbent upon him to come out from the rest of mankind, and to be united with Christ's Church. "The Lord hath put a difference," saith he; "now I will show this difference. My Master hath said, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' I put no trust in baptism, but I must show that I am no longer what I was. I desire to be obedient to my Lord and Master. I desire to cross the rubicon. To draw my sword against the world, once and for ever to throw away the scabbard. I long to do a something that shall make the world see that I am crucified to it, and that it is crucified to me. Let me then be buried in water, in the name of the Father. and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,' as the picture of my death to all the world. Let me rise out of the water, as the picture of my resurrection to a new life; and God help me from that blessed hour to go on my way walking as one who is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world." As often as the table is spread, upon which we celebrate the memorial of the body and the blood of Christ, God again seals that difference. The unconverted, if the minister be faithful, are warned to go their way, or if they eat there, they will eat and drink damnation to themselves, not discerning the Lord's body. They are invited to come, and they only who are believers in Jesus, who have a hope that they are changed men, and have been renewed by divine grace in the spirit of their minds. Thus do we show to the world in the two

outward symbols that the Lord hath put a difference.

But further: the whole of a Christian's life, if he be what he should be, is showing forth to the world that the Lord hath put a difference. Here are two men in trial, the same trouble has befallen them both; they are partners in business; their money is all gone; the house has gone to ruin; they are brought down to beggary, and have to start in the world again. Now, which of these two is the Christian man? There is one ready to tear his hair; he cannot bear that he should have worked all his life and now should be poor as Lazarus. He thinks Providence is unfair. "There is many a vagabond," says he, "getting rich, and here am I, after toiling hard and paying every man his own, brought down to the round, having nothing left." But the Christian man--if he really be a Christian, (mark that, for there are a great many that profess to be Christians and are not, and it is the rough wind that tries them)--says, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "I know," says he, "that all things work together for good. I will put my shoulder to the wheel, and work up once more;" and so with courage and with confidence in Christ he goes again to his labor, and God blesses him yet once more, nay, blesses him in his trials more than he was ever blessed in his prosperity. Here are two men again: they have both been doing wrong, and when the righteous fall as well as the wicked, who is to know the difference? The next morning one of them rises, and is quite easy about the matter--he knows no wounds in his conscience, or if he be uneasy it is because he is afraid of being found out. He is like one who, having fallen into the mire, lies and rolls there. But here comes the Christian. He feels he has done wrong. "What shall I do?" says he, "to make reparation to man, and to show my repentance towards God?" He would be ready to go down on his knees before any one he has injured and confess how wrong he has

been. He hates himself, he loathes himself, because he has done wrong. He would sooner die than sin; and now that he finds he has sinned, he wishes he had died sooner than he should ever have dishonored his Lord and Master. If you see a sheep fall into the mire, it is quick enough up again; but if the swine falls there, it wallows in it again and again, and nothing but the whip or the stick can make it rise. So that there is an essential difference between the righteous and the wicked, even in their sins. "A righteous man falleth seven times, but he riseth up again;" as for the wicked, he rolls and revels in his sin, abiding and continuing in it. God has set a difference, and even when that difference is obscured it may yet be discerned. There is a ring about the Christian man that is not to be mistaken. Do what you will with him, he is not what the other man is, and you cannot make him so. Here is a new coin which looks amazingly like a sovereign, and I turn it over. it is so clever a counterfeit that I cannot discover whether it is gold or no. Here is another: it is a light sovereign, I find. I look et them both, and at first sight I am inclined to think that my new-minted sovereign is the best of the two; for, say I the other is evidently much worn and light. But there is a ring about the Christian that proves him to be gold, after all, even when he is worn and short in weight. You may deface him so that the king's image is not apparent upon him, but he is gold for all that; he only needs to be tried, and in the hour of trial that golden sound of grace will detect him, and he will prove still to be one in whom God hath made a difference.

This distinction also comes out in a godly man when he is under the pressure of some strong temptation. There are two tradesmen: both seem to trade in the same way; but at last a rare chance occurs to them. If they have no conscience they can make a fortune. Now will be the test. One man looks out for the opportunity, and unscrupulously grasps it.

That man is no Christian: put that down as certain. There is another man: he feels a longing for the gain, for he is human, but his heart hates the sin, for it is renewed by divine grace. "No," he says; "better shut up shop than earn my living by dishonesty: better for me to be ruined in this life than that I should be ruined in the world to come." The maxim of the establishment on the other side of the road is, "We must live." The maxim of this shop will be, "We must die." You who are customers soon know in which place you will be dealt with most honestly, and there you discover in some degree that the Lord hath put a difference between Egypt and Israel.

But not to keep you long on this point: that difference shines forth very vividly in the dying hour. Oh! how distinct is that difference sometimes! The last time the cholera visited London with severity, though I had many engagements in the country, I gave them up to remain in London. It is the duty of the minister always to be on the spot in times of visitation and disease. I never saw more conspicuously in my life the difference between the man that feareth God and the man that feareth him not, than I did then. Called up one Monday morning at about half-past three, to go and see a man who was dying, I went to him and entered the place where he was lying. He had been down to Brighton on the Sunday morning on an excursion, and came back ill; and there he lay on the borders of the tomb. I stood by his side, and spoke to him. The only consciousness he had was a foreboding of terror, mingled with the stupor of alarm: soon even that was gone, and I had to stand sighing there with a poor old woman who had watched over him, hopeless altogether about his soul. I went home. I was called away to see a young woman; she was also in the last extremity, but it was a fair, fair sight: she was singing, though she knew she was dying; talking to those round about her, telling her brothers and sisters to follow her

to heaven, bidding good-bye to her father, smiling as if it were a marriage-day. She was happy and blessed. I then saw very clearly, that if there is not a difference in the joy of life there is a difference when we come to the dying hour. But the first case I mentioned is not the worst I have ever seen. Many have I seen dying, whose histories it would not do to tell. I have seen them when their eye-balls have been glaring from their sockets--when they have known Christ and have heard the gospel, but yet have rejected it. They have been dying in agonies so extreme, that one could only fly from the room, feeling that it was a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God' and to enter into that all-devouring fire. On the dying bed it will be manifest that the Lord hath put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

III. I have hurried over these first two points because I want to dwell very strongly and very solemnly upon my last. We spoke about the difference being seen between the righteous and the wicked. My last point is, WHY SHOULD THAT DIFFERENCE BE SEEN? I have here a practical aim and drift; and I hope that if the rest of the sermon shall fall dead upon you, this, at least, may quicken your conscience.

This is an age which has many hopeful signs in it; but yet, if we judge according to the rule of Scripture, there are some very black marks upon this century. I sometimes fear that the only age to which we can be truly likened is the time before the flood, when the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, and when there ceased to be a distinction between the Church and the world. It is but the part of candour to acknowledge, that there is such a mixture now-a-days, such a compromise, such a giving and a taking on both sides of religious questions, that we are like a leavened mass, mingled and united together. All this is wrong; for God has always intended there should be a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, as clear and as

palpable as the distinction between the day and the night.

My first argument is this. Whenever the Church has been thoroughly distinct from the world, she has always prospered. During the first three centuries the world hated the Church. The prison, the stake, the heels of the wild horse, these were thought too good for the followers of Christ. When a man became a Christian, he gave up father and mother, house and lands, nay, his own life also. When they met together they must meet in the catacombs, burning candles at high noon, because there was darkness in the depths of the earth. They were despised and rejected of men. "They wandered about in sheeps' skins and goats' skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented." But then was the age of heroes; that was the time of giants. Never did the Church so much prosper and so truly thrive as when she was baptized in blood. The ship of the Church never sails so gloriously along as when the bloody spray of her martyrs falls upon her deck. We must suffer, and we must die, if we are ever to conquer this world for Christ. Was there ever such a surprising miracle as the spread of the gospel during the first two or three centuries? Within fifty years after Christ had ascended to heaven, the gospel was preached in every known part of the world, and there were converts to Christ in the most inhospitable regions. Further than the ships of Tarshish had the gospel flown; the pillars of Hercules had not bounded the industry of the apostles. To wild and uncivilised tribes, to Picts and Scots, and to fierce Britons, was the gospel proclaimed. Churches were founded, some of which have lasted in their purity to this day. And all this, I believe, was partly the result of that striking, that marked difference between the Church and the world. Certainly, during the period after Constantine professed to be a Christian, changing with the times, because he saw it would strengthen his empire--from the time when the Church began to be linked

with the state--the Lord left her, and gave her up to barrenness, and Ichabod was written on her walls. It was a black day for Christendom when Constantine said, "I am a Christian." "By this sign I conquer," said he. Yes, it was the true reason of his pretended conversion, If he could conquer by the cross it was well enough; if he could have conquered by Jupiter he would have I liked it equally as well. From that time the Church began to degenerate. And coming down to the middle ages, when you could not tell a Christian from a worldling, where were you to find piety at all, or life or grace left in the lands Then came Luther, and with a rough grasp he rent away the Church from the world--pulled her away at the risk of rending her in pieces. He would not have her linked in affinity with the world, and then "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed;" but he that sitteth in the heavens did laugh at them; Jehovah had them in derision. The Church went forth conquering and to conquer, and her main weapon was her non-conformity to the world, her coming out from among men. Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and I will find a little marginal note reading thus: "In this age men could readily see where the Church began and where the world ended." Never were there good times when the Church and the world were joined in marriage with one another.

But though this were sufficient argument for keeping the Church and the world distinct, there are many others. The more the Church is distinct from the world in her acts and in her maxims, the more true is her testimony for Christ, and the more potent is her witness against sin. We are sent into this world to testify against evils; but if we dabble in them ourselves, where is our testimony? If we ourselves be found faulty, we are false witnesses; we are not sent of God, our testimony

is of none effect. I do not hesitate to say there are tens of thousands of professing Christians, whose testimony before the world is rather injurious than beneficial. The world looks at them, and says, "Well, I see: you can be a Christian, and yet remain a rogue." "Ah!" says another, "you can be a Christian, I perceive; but then you will have to be doleful and miserable." "Ah!" cries another, "these Christians like to drink sin in secret behind the door. Their Christianity lies in not liking to sin openly; but they can devour a widow's house when nobody is looking on; they can be drunkards, only it must be in a very small party; they would not like to be discovered tipsy where there were a hundred eyes to look at them." Now, what is all that? It is just this,--that the world has found out that the Church visible is not the unmixed Church of Christ, since it is not true to its principles, anal does not stand up for the uprightness and integrity which are the marks of the genuine church of God. Many Christians forget that they are bearing a testimony: they do not think that anybody notices them. Ay, but they do. There are no people so much watched as Christians. The world reads us up, from the first letter of our lives to the end; and if they can find a flaw--and, God forgive us, they may find very many--they are sure to magnify the flaw as much as ever they can. Let us therefore be very watchful, that we live close to Christ, that we walk in his commandments always that the world may see that the Lord hath put a difference..

But now I have a very sad thing to say--I wish that I could withhold it, but I cannot. Unless, brothers and sisters, you make it your daily business to see that there is a difference between you and the world, you will do more hurt than you can possibly do good. The Church of Christ is at this day accountable for many fearful sins. Let me mention one which is but the type of others. By what means think you were the

fetters rivetted on the wrist of our friend who sits there, a man like ourselves, though of a black skin? It is the Church of Christ that keeps his brethren under bondage; if it were not for that Church, the system of slavery would go back to the hell from which it sprung. If there were no slave floggers but men who are fit for so degrading an office; if there were not found Christian ministers (?) who can apologise for slavery from the pulpit, and church members who sell the children of nobler beings than themselves--if it were not for this, Africa would be free. Albert Barnes spoke right truly when he said slavery could not exist for an hour if it were not for the countenance of the Christian Church. But what does the slaveholder say when you tell him that to hold our fellow-creatures in bondage is a sin, and a damnable one, inconsistent with grace? He replies "I do not believe your slanders; look at the Bishop of So-and-so, or the minister of such-and-such a place, is not he a good man, and does not he whine out Cursed be Canaan?' Does not he quote Philemon and Onesimus? Does he not go and talk Bible, and tell his slaves that they ought to feel very grateful for being his slaves, for God Almighty made them on purpose that they might enjoy the rare privilege of being cowhided by a Christian master. Don't tell me," he says, "if the thing were wrong, it would not have the Church on its side." And so Christ's free Church bought with his blood, must bear the shame of cursing Africa, and keeping her sons in bondage. From this evil, good Lord deliver us. If Manchester merchants and Liverpool traders have a share in this guilt, at least let the Church be free of this hell-filling crime. Men have tried hard to make the Bible support this sum of all villanies, but slavery, the thing which defiles the Great Republic such slavery is quite unknown to the Word of God, and by the laws of the Jew; it was impossible that it ever could exist. I have known men quote texts as

excuses for being damned, and I do not wonder that men can find Scripture to justify them in buying and selling the souls of men.

And what think you is it, to come home to our own land, that props up the system of trample that is carried on among us? You all know that there are businesses where it is not possible for a young man to be honest in the shop, where, if he spoke the downright truth, he would be discharged. Why is it, think you, that the system of ticketing goods in the window differently from what they are sold indoors, or exhibiting one thing and then giving another article, the system of telling white lies across the counter with the intention of getting a better price, is maintained? Why it would not stamp an hour if it were not for the professing Christians who practice it. They have not the moral courage to say once for all, "We will have nothing to do with these things." If they did, if the Church renounced these unholy customs, business could alter within the next twelve months. The props of felony, and the supports of roguery are these professing Christian men, who bend their backs to do as other men do; who, instead of stemming the torrent, give up, and swim along with it--the dead fish in our churches, that flow with the stream, unlike the living fish which always go against it, and swim upward to the river's source. I would not speak too severely of Christ's Church, for I love her; but because I love her I must therefore utter this. Our being so much like the world, our trading as the world trades, our talking as the world talks, our always insisting upon it that we must do as other people do, this is doing more mischief to the world, than all our preachers can hope to effect good. "Come ye out from among them, touch not the unclean thing, be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

This surely, a stern rough argument, might move us to be separate from

the world. But once again, how is it possible for us to honor Jesus Christ, while there is no difference between us and the world? I can imagine that a man may not profess to be a Christian, and yet he may honor his Master, that however is a matter of imagination. I do not know of an instance, but I cannot imagine a man professing to be a Christian, and then acting as the crowd acts, and yet honoring Christ. Methinks I see my Master now he stands before me. He has more than those five blessed wounds. I see his hands running with blood. "My Master! my Master!" I cry, where didst thou get those wounds? those are not the piercings of the nails, nor the gash of the spear-thrust; whence come those wounds" I hear him mournfully reply, "These are the wounds which I have received in the house of my friends. such-and-such a Christian fell, such-and-such a disciple followed me afar off, and at last Peter-like denied me altogether. Such an one of my children is covetous, such another of them is proud, such another has taken his neighbor by the throat, and saith, Pay me what thou owest,' and I have been wounded in the house of my friends." O, blessed Jesus forgive us, forgive us, and give us thy grace that we may do so no more, for we would follow thee whithersoever thou goest; thou knowest Lord we would be thine, we would honor thee and not grieve thee. O give us now then of thine own Spirit, that we may come out from the world and be like thyself,--holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

I have but just these two things to say, and then I have done. To professors of religion this word. There are some of you professors of religion that are base coin. When you come to the Lord's table you lie, and when you say of yourself, "I am a member of such-and-such a church," you say what is a disgrace to you. Now let me remind you, sirs, that you may hold your profession here, but when you come before God's bar at last you will find it a terrible thing not to have had a

reality in your profession. Tremble, sirs, at God's right hand. There hangs the scale and you must be put into it, and if you are found wanting, your portion must be among the deceivers, and you know where that is--it is in the lowest pit of hell. Tremble, Sir Deacon, tremble, Church-member, if you are not what you profess to be there is a doom awaiting you of a fiercer, a direr sort than even for the ungodly and the reprobate. From the height of your profession you shall be plucked down. You have built your nest among the stars, but you must make your bed in hell. You have decked your head with a crown, but you must wear a crown of fire, you must have those fine robes plucked off you, that tinsel and that paint must all be removed. and you, naked to your shame, the hooting-mark of devils, shall become a hissing even to the damned of hell, as they shall point to you and cry, "There goes the man who destroyed himself by deceiving others. There is the wretch who talked of God and talked of Christ, and did not think himself such an one as we are, and now he too is bound up in the bundle to be burnt." The last word is to those who are not professors at all. God has made a difference between you and the righteous. Oh, my dear friends, I beseech you turn that thought over in your minds! There are no three characters, no intermediate links; there is no border-land between the righteous and the wicked. To-day you are either a friend to God or an enemy to him. You are at this hour either quickened or dead, and oh! remember, when death comes it is either heaven or hell with you,--either angels or fiends must be your companions, and either the flames must be your bed and fiery coverlet, or else the glories of eternity must be your perpetual inheritance. Remember, the way to heaven is open. "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus shall be saved." Believe on him, believe on him, and live. Trust him, and you are saved. Cast your soul's confidence on Jesus, and you are now delivered. God

help you to do that now, and there shall be no difference any more between you and the righteous, but you shall be of them, and with them, in the day when Jesus cometh to sit upon the throne of his father David, and to reign among men.

Chapter 19

Resurgam

A Sermon

(No. 306)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 1st, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come; Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."--1 Corinthians 15:35-38.

We preach with words; God preacheth to us in acts and deeds. If we would but perceive it, creation and providence are two continual sermons, streaming from the mouth of God. The seasons are four evangelists, each of them having his testimony to utter to us. Doth not summer preach to us of God's bounty, of the richness of his goodness, of that lavish munificence with which he has been pleased to supply the earth, not simply with food for man, but with delights for both ear and eye in the beauteous landscape the melodious birds, and the flowers of various hue? Have you never heard the still small voice of autumn, who bears the wheatsheaf, and whispers to us in the rustling of the seer leaf? He bids us prepare to die. "All we," saith he, "do fade as a leaf, and all our righteousnesses are but as filthy rags." Then comes winter, crowned with snow, and he thunders out a most mighty sermon, which, if we would but listen to it, might well impress us with the terrors of God's vengeance, and let us see how soon he can strip the

earth of all its pleasantries, and enrobe it in storm, when he shall come himself to judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with equity. But it seems to me that spring reads us a most excellent discourse upon the grand doctrine of revelation. This very month of April, which, if it be not the very entrance of spring, yet certainly introduces us to the fullness of it; this very month> bearing by its name the title of the opening month, speaks to us of the resurrection. As we have walked through our gardens, fields, and woods, we have seen the flower-buds ready to burst upon the trees, and the fruit-blossoms hastening to unfold themselves; we have seen the buried flowers upstarting from the sod, and they have spoken to us with sweet, sweet voice, the words, "Thou too shalt rise again, thou too shalt be buried in the earth like seeds that are lost in winter, but thou shalt rise again, and thou shalt live and blossom in eternal spring."

I propose this morning, as God shall enable, to listen to that voice of spring, proclaiming the doctrine of the resurrection, a meditation all the more appropriate from the fact, that the Sabbath before last we considered the subject of Death, and I hope that then very solemn impressions were made upon our minds. May the like impressions now return, accompanied with more joyous ones, when we shall look beyond the grave, through the valley of the shadow of death, to that bright light in the distance--the splendours and glory of life and immortality.

In speaking to you upon this text, I would remark in the outset, that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is a doctrine peculiar to Christianity. The heathen, by the feeble light of nature, were able to spell out the truth of the immortality of the soul. Those professors of religion who deny that immortality, are not so far advanced in learning as the heathen themselves. When you meet with any who think that the

soul of man may possibly become annihilated, make them a present of that little catechism brought out by the Westminster Assembly, which bears the title, "Catechism for the Young and Ignorant." Let them read that through, and begin to understand that God hath not made man in vain. The resurrection of the body was that which was new in the apostolic times. When Paul stood up on Mars hill, in the midst of the learned assembly of the Areopagites, had he spoke." to them about the immortality of the soul, they would not have laughed; they would have respected him, for this was one of the sublime truths which their own wise men had taught, but when he event on to assert that the flesh and blood which was laid in the tomb should yet arise again, that bones which had become the dwelling place of worms, that flesh which had corrupted and decayed, should actually start afresh into life, that the body as well as the soul should live, some mocked' and others said, "We will hear thee again of this matter." The fact is, reason teaches the immortality of the spirit, it is revelation alone which teaches the immortality of the body. It is Christ alone who hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. He was the clearest proclaimer of that grand truth. Albeit that it had lain in the secret faith of many of the ancient people of God before, yet he it was who first set forth in clear terms the grand truth that there should be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. AS far as I know, the doctrine has not been disputed in the Christian church. There have been some few heretics who have denied it at divers times, but they have been so few, so utterly insignificant, that it is not worth while to take any notice of their scruples, or of the objections which they have urged. Instead thereof, we will turn to our text; one will assume that the doctrine is true, and so proceed to utter some words of explanation upon it.

First, then, our text suggests the real indentity of the resurrection body. The apostle uses the figure of a seed, a shrivelled grain of wheat. It is put into the ground, there it dies all the farinaceous part of it decays and forms a peculiarly fine soil, into which the life-germ strikes itself, and upon which the lifegerm feeds. The seed itself dies, with the exception of a particle almost too small to be perceived, which is the real life contained within the wheat. By-and-bye we see a green blade upstarting: that grows, swells, and increases, until it comes to be corn in the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. Now no one has any suspicion but that the same wheat arises from the soil into which it was cast. Put into the earth, we believe it springs up, and we are accustomed to talk of it in our ordinary language as being the very same seed which we sowed, although the difference is striking and marvellous. Here you have a plant some three feet high, bearing many grains of wheat, and there you had the other day a little shrivelled grain; yet no one doubts but that the two are the same. So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The body is here but as a shrivelled seed; there is no beauty in it that we should desire it. It is put into a grave, like wheat that is sown in the earth, there it rots and it decays, but God preserves within it a sort of life germ which is immortal, and when the trump of the archangel shall shake the heavens and the earth it shad expand to the full flower of manhood, which shall blossom from the earth. a far more glorious form than the manhood which was buried. You are, my brethren, today, but as a heap of wheat, a heap of poor shrivelled corn. Despite that earthly beauty which makes glad our countenances, we are after all shrivelled and worthless, compared with what your bodies shall be when they shall awake from their beds of silent dust and cold damp clay. Yet whole they shall be different, they shall be precisely the same, it

shall be the same body; the identity shall be preserved. Though there shall seem to be but little similarity, yet shall no man doubt but that the very body which was sown in the earth hath sprung up to eternal life. I suppose that if I should bring here a certain grain of seed, and you had never seen the image of the plant into which it would ripen, and I should submit it to a thousand persona here present, and ask them this question--"What form will this seed assume when it shall grow into a plant and bear a flower?" none of you could possibly tell what it would be like; yet when you saw it spring up you would say, "Well, I have no doubt that the heart's-ease sprang from its own seed. I am sure that a violet springs from a violet seed. I cannot doubt that the lily hath its own appropriate root." And another time, when you come to see the seed, you perhaps imagine you see some little likeness, at least you never mistrust the identity. Though there are wide extremes of difference between the tiny mustard seed and the great tree beneath the branches of which the birds of the air build their nests, yet you never for a moment question but what they are precisely the same. The identity is preserved. So shall it be in the resurrection of the dead. The difference shall be extraordinary, yet shall the body be still the same.

In order to affirm this, the ancient Christian church was in the habit in their creed of adding a sentence to the Article which runs thus:--"I believe in the resurrection of the dead." They added, in Latin words to this effect:--"I believe in the resurrection of the dead, of this very flesh and blood." I do not know that the addition was ever authorized by the church, but it was continually used, especially at the time when there was a discussion as to the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The very flesh and blood that is buried, the very eyes that are closed in death, the very hand which stiffens by my

corpse, these very members shall live again--not the identical particles of the same matter any more than the self-same particles of the wheat spring up to make a blade, and to make full corn in the ear. Yet shall they be identical, in the true sense of the term, they shall spring up from this body--shall be the true result and development of this poor flesh and blood, which we now drag about with us here below. Ten thousand objections have been raised against this, but they are all readily answerable. Some have said, "But when men's bodies are dead, and are committed to the grave, they are often digged up, and the careless sexton mixes them up with common mould; nay, it sometimes happens that they are carted away from the churchyard, and strewn over the fields, to become a rich manure for wheat, so that the particles of the body are absorbed into the corn that is growing, and they travel round in a circle until they become the food of man. So that the particle which may have been in the body of one man enters into the body of another. Now," say they, "how can all these particles be tracked?" Our answer is if it were necessary, every atom could be traced. Omnipotence and Omniscience could do it. If it were needful that God should search and find out every individual atom that ever existed, he would be able to detect the present abode of every single particle. The astronomer is able to tell the position of one star by the aberration of the motion of another, by his calculation, apart from observation, he can discover an unknown orb; its hugeness puts it within his reach. But to God there is nothing little or great; he can find out the orbit of one atom by the aberration in the orbit of another atom--he can pursue and overtake each separate particle. But recollect, this is not necessary at all, for, as I said before, the identity may be preserved without there being the same atoms. Just go back to the excellent illustration of our text. The wheat is just the

same, but in the new wheat that has grown up there may not be one solitary particle of that matter which was in the seed cast into the ground. A little seed that shall not weigh the hundredth part of an ounce falls into the earth, and springs up and produces a forest tree that shall weigh two tons. Now, if there be any part of the original seed in the tree, it must be but in the proportional of a millionth part, or something less than that. And yet is the tree positively identical with the seed--it is the same thing. And so there may only be a millionth part of the particles of my body in the new body which I shall wear but yet it may still be the same. It is not the identity of the matter that will make positive identity. And I shall show you that again. Are you not aware that our bodies are changing--that in about every ten years we have different bodies from what we had ten years ago? That is to say, by decay, and the continual wearing away of our flesh, there is not in this body I have here, a single particle that was in my body ten years ago, and yet I am the same man. I know I am precisely the same. So you. You shall have been born in America, and lived there twenty years; you shall suddenly be transferred to India, and live there another twenty years; you come back to America to see your friends--you are the same man, they know you, recognize you, you are precisely the same individual; but yet philosophy teaches us a fact which cannot be denied--that your body would have changed twice in the time you have been absent from your friends; that every particle is gone, and has had its place supplied by another; and yet the body is the same. So that it is not necessary there should be the same particles; it is not needful that you should track every atom and bring it back in order that the body should preserve its identity.

Have you never heard the story of the wife of Peter Martyr, a celebrated reformer, who died some years before the time of Queen Mary?

Since his enemies could not reach his body, they took up the body of his wife after she was dead, and buried it in a dunghill. During the reign of Elizabeth, the body was removed from its contemptuous hiding-place; it was then reduced to ashes. In order that the Romanists, if they should ever prevail again, might never do dishonor to that body, they took the ashes of Peter Martyr's wife, and mixed them with the reputed ashes of a Romish saint. Mixing the two together, they said, "Now these Romanists will never defile this body, because they will be afraid of desecrating the relics of their own saint."

Perhaps some wiseacres man say, "How can these two be separated?" Why, they could be divided readily enough if God willed to do it; for granted that God is omniscient omnipotent, and you have never to ask how, for Omniscience and Omnipresence put the question out of court, and decide the thing at once. Besides, it is not necessary that it should be so. The life-germs of the two bodies may not have mixed together. God has set his angels to watch over them, as he set Michael to watch over the body of Moses, and he will bring out the two life-germs, and they shall be developed and the two bodies shall start up separately at the sound of the archangel's trump. Remember, then, and doubt not that the very body in which you sinned shall be the very body in which you shall suffer in hell; and the body in which you believe in Christ, and in which you yield yourselves to God, shall be the very body in which you shall walk the golden streets, and in which you shall praise the name of God for ever and ever.

So much upon this first point. But observe, while the identity is real, the transformation is glorious. The body here is mortal, always subject to decay. We dwell in a poor uncomfortable tent, continually is the canvas being rent, the cords are being loosed, and the tent pins are being pulled up. We are full of sufferings, and aches, and pains, which

are but the premonitions of coming death. We all know, some by our decayed teeth, which are, as I said the other day, but the emblems of a decayed man; others by those grey hairs which are scattered here and there; we all know that our bodies are so constituted that they cannot remain here except for a limited period, and they must--so God has willed it--return to their native dust. Not so, however, the new body: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. "It will be a body upon which the tooth of time can have no power, and into which the dart of death can never be thrust. Age shall roll after age, but that body shall exist in everlasting youth. It shall sing, but never shall its song be stayed by weakness; it shall fly, but never shall its flight flag with weariness. There shall be no signs of mortality; the shroud, the mattock, and the spade are never seen in heaven. Such a thing as an open grave shall never appear in the celestial kingdom, there they live, live, live, but never, never, never shall they die.

See then, how different the body must be; for as this body is constituted, every nerve and every blood vessel tells me I must die. It cannot be otherwise. I must endure this stern decree, "Dust to dust, earth to earth, ashes to ashes," but in heaven every nerve of the new body shall cry, "Immortality." Every part of that new frame shall speak for itself, and tell to the immortal spirit that they are everlasting companions, managed in eternal wedlock.

There shall be, moreover, a great change in the new body as to its beauty. "It is sown in dishonor; it shall be raised in glory." The old metaphor employed by all preachers upon this doctrine must be used again. You see here a crawling caterpillar, a picture of yourself, a creature that eats and drinks, and may readily be trodden on. Wait a few weeks, that caterpillar shall spin itself enshroud, lie down, become inactive, and sleep. A picture of what you shall do. You must

spin your winding-sheet and then be laid in the tomb. But wait awhile; when the warmth of the sun shall come that apparently lifeless thing shall burst its sheath. The chrysalis shall fall off, and the insect fly forth equipped with glittering wings. Having arrived at its full state of perfection, the imago the very image of the creature shall be seen by us all dancing in the sunbeam. So shall we after passing through our wormhood here to our chrysalis state in the grave, burst our coffins and mount aloft glorious winged creatures made like unto the angels;--the same creatures, but oh! so changed, so different, that we should scarce know our former selves if we could be able to meet them again after we have been glorified in heaven.

There shall be a change, then, in our form and nature. Old master Spenser, who was a rare hand at making metaphors, says, "The body here is like an old rusty piece of iron, but Death shall be the blacksmith, he shall take it and he shall make it hot in his fire, until it shall sparkle and send forth burning heat and look bright and shining." And so surely is it. We are thrust into the earth as into the fire, and there shall we be made to sparkle and to shine and to be full of radiance, no more the rusty things that we once were, but fiery spirits, like the cherubim and the seraphim, we shall wear a power and a glory the like of which we have not even yet conceived.

Again, another transformation shall take place, namely, in power. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." The same body that is weak, shall be raised in power. We are puny things here; there is a limit to our labors, and our usefulness is straightened by reason of our inability to perform what we would. And oh, bow weak we become when we die I A man must be carried by his own friends to his own grave; he cannot even lay himself down in his last resting-place. Passively he submits to be laid out, to be wrapped up in his winding sheet, and to

be shut up in the darkness of the grave. Silently, passively he submits to be carried away with the pall covered over him, and to be put into the earth. The clods are shovelled over him, but he knows it not, neither could he resist his burial if he were conscious of it. But that powerless body shall be raised in power. That was a fine idea of Martin Luther, which he borrowed from St. Anselm, that the saints shall be so strong when they are risen from the dead, that if they chose they could shake the world; they could pull up islands by their roots, or hurl mountains into the air. Some modern writers, borrowing their ideas from Milton, where he speaks of the battles of the angels, where they plucked up the hills with all their shaggy loads, rivers and trees at once, and hurled them at the fallen spirits, have taught that we shall be clothed with gigantic forge. I think if we do not go the length of the poets, we have every reason to believe that the power of the risen body will be utterly inconceivable. These, however, are but guesses at the truth; this great mystery is yet beyond us. I believe that when I shall enter upon my new body, I shall be able to fly from one spot to another, like a thought, as swiftly as I will; I shall be here and there, swift as the rays of light. From strength to strength, my spirit shall be able to leap onward to obey the behests of God; upborne with wings of ether, it shall flash its way across that shoreless sea, and see the glory of God in all his works, and yet ever behold his face. For the eye shall then be strong enough to pierce through leagues of distance, and the memory shall never fail. The heart shall be able to love to a fiery degree, and the head to comprehend right thoroughly. It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But, brethren and sisters, to come back to reality, and leave fiction for a moment, though it doth not appear what we shad be, yet we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And do you know what

we shall be like, if we shall be like him? Behold the picture of what Jesus Christ is like, and we shall be like him. "I saw," saith John, "one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle His head. and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as tee sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Such shall we be when we are like Christ; what tongue can tell, what soul can guess the glories that surround the saints when they' start from their beds of dust, and rise to immortality.

But now, to turn away from these, which I fear to very many of you are rather uninteresting particulars, let me give you one or two figures which may show to you the change which shall take place in us on the day of resurrection.

Do you see yonder a beggar? he is picking rags from a dunghill, he pulls out piece after piece from the heap of dust, as he uses his rake, you may see the like any day, if you will go to those great dustyards in Agar Town. There he pulls out piece after piece, and puts it in his basket. What can be the value of those miserable old rags? He takes them away, they are carried off, picked, sorted, rag to its own rag, like to like. By-and-bye they are washed, they are put into the mill, they are beaten hard, they are smashed, they are ground to pulp, and what is that I see just coming out of yonder mill? A clear white sheet, without a stain and whence came this? "I am the son of the old rag," saith he, "nay, I am the identical rag that was but a few hours ago picked from the dung-heap." Oh! strange! Doth purity come out of

impurity, and doth this beauty, this utility come out of that which was neither comely nor useful, but which men loathed, and cast away as a worthless thing? See here, brethren, the picture of yourselves; your bodies are like rags, put away into this vast dunghill earth" and there buried, but the angel shall come and sort you, body to its body, the righteous to the righteous, the wicked to the wicked, they shall come together, bone to his bone and flesh to his flesh; and what do I see?--I behold a body like unto an angel, with eyes of fire, and a face like the brightness of the sun, and wings like lightnings for swiftness. Whence art thou, thou bright spirit? I am he that was buried, I am that thing that once was worms' meat, but now I am glorious through the name of Jesus' and through the power of God. You have there before you a picture of the resurrection, a homely picture, it is true, but one which may vividly convey the idea to homely minds. Take another--one used of old by that mighty preacher, Chrysostom--there is an old house, a straight and narrow cottage, and the inhabitant of it often shivers with the cold winter, and is greatly oppressed by the heat of summer; it is ill adapted to his wants, the windows are too small and very dark, he cannot keep his treasure safely therein; he is often a prisoner; and when I have passed by his house I have heard him sighing at the window: "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The good master comes, the landlord of the house, he speaks to the tenant, and he bids him come away, "I am about to pull down thy old house," saith he, "and I would not have thee here while I am pulling it stone from stone, lest thou be hurt and injured. Come away with me and live in my palace, while I am pulling thy old house to pieces." He does so, and every stone of the old house is thrown down; it is levelled with the ground, and even the foundations are dug up. Another is built: it is of costly

slabs of marble, the windows thereof are pure and clear, all its gates are of agate, and all its borders of precious stones, while all the foundations thereof are of chrysolite, and the roof thereof is of jasper. And now the master of the house speaks to the old inhabitant, "Come back, and I will show thee the house which I have built for thee." O what joy, when that inhabitant shall enter and find it so well adapted to his wants, where every power shall have full range, where he shall see God out of its windows, not as through a glass, darkly, but face to face, where he could invite even Christ himself to come and sup with him, and not feel that the house is beneath the dignity of the Son of Man. You know the parable, you know how your old house, this clay body, is to be pulled down, how your spirit is to dwell in heaven for a little while without a body, and how afterwards you are to enter into a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a mansion which is holy, incorruptible, and undefiled, and which shall never decay.

To use yet a fresh figure, I see a beggar passing by a rich man's door, that poor wretch is covered with filth, his garments are hanging about him in pieces as if the wind would blow all away, and drive both man and garments amongst the rags upon the dunghill. How he shivers, how he seeks to pull about him that scant cloak which will not meet around his loins, and will not shield him from the blast. As for his shoes, they are indeed old and clouted, and all his garments are of such a sort that one never could know the original, for they have been mended and patched a thousand times, and now they need to be mended and patched again. He is freely invited to come into the rich man's hall, we will not tell you what is done in the meantime, but we will see him come out of that door again, and would you know him. Would you believe that he is the same man? He has been washed and cleansed; on his back there hangs the imperial purple, while on his head glitters a brilliant

crown; his feet are shod with silver, and on his hands there are rings of gold. About the paps he wears a golden girdle; and as he comes abroad bright spirits wait on him and do him honor angels wait to be his servants, and think it to be their highest pleasure to fly to do his will. Is this the same man and is this the same dress? It is the same. By some marvellous might, rather by a divine energy, God has received this beggar, taken him into the inner chamber of the grave; has washed him from all imperfections; and now he comes out as one of the princes of the blood royal of heaven. And as is his nature, such is his apparel; as is his dignity, such is his estate) and such the company of servants who wait upon him.

Not to multiply illustrations, we will use but one more. I see before me an old and battered cup, which many a black lip hath touched, out of which many a villain's throat has received moisture. It is battered and covered over with filth. Who could tell what metal it is? It is brought in and given to the silversmith, he no sooner receives it, than he begins to break it into pieces, he dashes it into shivers again and again, he pounds it until he has broken it, and then puts it into his fining pot and melts it. Now you begin to see it sparkle again, and by and bye he beats it out and fashions it into a goodly chalice, out of which a king may drink. Is this the same? the very same thing, This glorious cup; is this the old battered silver we saw just now; silver did I say, it looked like battered filth. Yes it is the same, and we who are here below like vessels, alas! too unfit for the master's use; vessels which have even given comfort to the evil ones, and helped to do the work of Satan, we shall be put into the furnace of the grave, and be there melted down and friend and fashioned into a glorious wine cup that shall stand upon the banqueting table of the Son of God.

I have thus sought to illustrate the change, and now I will occupy your

attention but one or two minutes on another thought which seems to lie within the range of my text. We have had the real identity under the glorious transformation. I bring you back to a thought kindred to the first. There will be in the bodies of the righteous an undoubted personality of character. If you sow barley, it will not produce wheat: if you sow tares, they will not spring up in the form of rye. Every grain hath its own peculiar form: God hath given to every seed his own body. So, my brothers and sisters, there are differences among us here; no two bodies are precisely alike: there are marks on our countenances, and in our bodily conformation, that show that we are different. We are of one blood, but not of one fashion. Well, when we are put into the grave we shall crumble back, and come to the same elements; but when we rise we shall every one of us rise diverse from the other. The body of Paul shall not produce a body precisely like that of Peter. Nor shall the flesh of Andrew bring forth a new body like that of the sons of Zebedee, but to every seed his own body. In the case of our blessed Lord and Master you win remember that when he rose himself from the dead he preserved his personality, there were still the wounds in his hands, and still there was the spear-mark in his side. I do not doubt that when he underwent his transfiguration, and at the time of his ascension up to heaven, he still retained the marks of his wounds. For do we not sing, and is not our song based upon Scripture?--

He looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still.

So, brethren, though of course we shall retain no weaknesses, nothing which will cause sorrow, yet every Christian will retain his individuality; he will be like and yet unlike all his fellows. As we know Isaiah from Jeremy here, so shall we know them above. As I differ from you here, if we two shall together praise God, there shall be some

difference between us above. Not the difference in failings, but the difference in the perfections of the form of the new body. I sometimes think martyrs will wear their scars. And why should they not? It were a loss to them if they should lose their honors. Perhaps they shall wear their ruby crown in Paradise, and we shall know them--

"Foremost mongst the sons of light
'Midst the bright ones doubly bright."

Perhaps the men who come from the catacombs of Rome will wear some sort of pallor on their brow that will show that they came from darkness, where they saw not the light of the sun. Perhaps the minister of Christ, though he shall not need to say to his fellows, "know the Lord," shall still be chief among the tellers out of the ways of God. Perhaps the sweet singer of Israel shall still be foremost in the choir of the golden harps, and loudest among them that shall lead the strain. And if these he fancies, yet am I sure that one star differeth from another star in glory. Orion shall not be confounded with Arcturus, nor shall Mazaroth for a moment be confounded with Orion. We shall an be separate and distinct. Perhaps we shall each one have our constellation there, as we shall cluster into our own societies, and gather around those whom we best have known on earth. Personality win be maintained. I do not doubt but what you will know Isaiah in heaven, and you will recognize the great preachers of the ancient Christian church; you will be able to speak with Chrysostom, and wilt talk with Whitfield. It may be you shall have for your companions those who were your companions here; those with whom you took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God, shall be with you there, and you shall know them, and with transporting joy you shall there together tell your former trials and ancient triumphs, and the glories you are alike made to share.

Treasure up, then, these things, the identity of your body after its

glorious transformation, and, at the same time, the personality which will prevail.

I want, now, your solemn attention for some five minutes, while I sketch a most fearful contrast here. The things I have already spoken should make the children of God happy. At Stratford-on-Bow, in the days of Queen Mary, there was once a stake erected for the burning of two martyrs, one of them a lame man, the other a blind man. Just when the fire was lit, the lame man hurled away his staff, and turning round said to the blind man, "Courage, brother, this fire will cure us both." So can the righteous say of the grave, "Courage, the grave will cure us all, we shall leave our infirmities behind us." What patience this should give us to endure all our trials, for they are not of long duration. They are but as the carvings of the graver's tool, shaping these rough blocks of clay, to bring them into the right form and shape, that they may bear the image of the heavenly. But the contrast is awful. Brethren, the wicked must rise again from the dead. The lip with which you have drunk the intoxicating drink till you have reeled again, that lip shall be used in drinking down the fiery wrath of God. Remember, too, ungodly woman, the eyes that are full of lust will one be full of horror, the ear with which you listen to lascivious conversation must listen to the sullen moans, the hollow groans, and shrieks of tortured ghosts. Be not deceived; you sinned in your body, you will be damned in your body. When you die your spirit must suffer alone, that will be the beginning of hell, but your body must rise again, then this very flesh in which you have transgressed the laws of God this very body must smart for it. It must he in the fire and burn, and crack, and writhe throughout eternity. Your body will be raised incorruptible, otherwise the fire would consume it. It will become like the asbestos stone, which lies in the flame and yet is never consumed.

If it were this flesh and blood it would soon die under the pangs we must endure, but it will be a body all but omnipotent. As I spoke of the righteous having such great power, so shall you have; but it will be power to agonize, power to suffer, power to die, and yet to live, uncrushed by the stern foot of death. Think of this, ye sensualists, who care not for your souls, but who pamper your bodies; you shall have that fair complexion scorched away; those members that have become instruments of lust, shall become instruments of hell. Rotting as they will do in the grave, they shall nevertheless rise with a fiery immortality about them, and endure an eternity of agony and unutterable woe and punishment. Is not that enough to make a man tremble and cry, "God be merciful unto me a sinner?"

But further, remember that while your body shall be identically the same, yet it too will be transformed, and as the wheat brings forth the wheat, so the nettle seed brings forth the nettle. What your body will be like I cannot tell, but perhaps as the body of the righteous will come to be like Christ, yours may become like the body of the devil, whatever that may be--the same hideous conformation, the same demon gaze and hellish stare which characterize that proud archangel shall characterize you; you shall have the image and the lineaments of the first traitor stamped upon your fire-enduring face. Seeds of sin, are ye prepared to ripen into the fun blown flower of destruction? Ye seeds of evil, are ye ready to be scattered now from Death's hand, and then to spring up an awful harvest of tormented ones? Yet so it must be unless you turn to God. Except you repent, he has said, and he will do it, he is able to cast both body and soul into hell.

And let me remind you yet once again, that there will be in you an undoubted personality, you will be known in hell. The drunkard shall have the drunkard's punishment; the swearer shall have the swearer's

corner to himself. "Bind them up in bundles to burn, and cast them into the fire." Thus saith the voice of inflexible justice. You shall not suffer in another man's body but in your own, and you shall be known to be the very man that sinned against God. You shall be looked at by one who sees you to-day, if you die impenitent, who will say to you, "We went up to that hall together; we heard a sermon on the resurrection which had a frightful ending; we laughed at it, but we have found out that it is true." And one will say to the other, "I should have known you though we had not met these many years till we met in hell. I should have known you, there is something about your new body which lets me know that it is the same body that you had on earth." And then you will mutually say to one another, "These pangs that we are now enduring, this horror of great darkness, these chains of fire that are reserved for us, are they not well deserved?" And you will curse God together again, and suffer together, and will be made to feel that you have only received the due reward of your deeds. "Did not the man warn us," you will say, "did he not warn us, did he not bid us fly to Christ for refuge?--did we not despise it, and make a jeer of what he said? We are rightly punished; we damned ourselves, we cut our own throats, we kindled hell for ourselves, and found the fuel of our own burning for ever and ever."

Oh! my dear hearers, I cannot bear to stay on this subject; let me finish with just this word. "Whoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." That means you poor man, though perhaps you were drunk last night, and scarcely got up time enough to come here this morning. If thou believest, William, thou shalt be saved. This means thee, poor woman, harlot though thou be--if thou cast thyself on Christ thou art saved. This means thee, respectable man, thou who trustest in thine own works--if thou reliest on Christ thou shalt be saved, but not if thou

trustest in thyself. Oh! be wise, be wise. May God give us grace now to learn that highest wisdom, and may we now look to the cross and to the quivering Lamb that bleeds upon it, and see him as he rises from the dead and ascends up on high, and believing in him; may we receive the hope and the assurance of a blissful resurrection in him.

NOTES:

I shall rise again.

Chapter 20

Importance of Small Things in Religion

A Sermon

(No. 307)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 8th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"The Lord our God made a breach upon us for that we sought him not after the due order."--1 Chron. 15:13.

LET me explain the events of which a summary is to be found in 2 Samuel 6., and 1 Chronicles 13:and 15:The ark of the covenant was a kind of chest made of shittim wood, and lined within and without with gold. Within this ark were preserved the tables of stone, which were received from heaven by Moses when he was upon the mount. There also lay the golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. Upon the lid of it were represented cherubic figures of angels; and between the wings of the cherubim, when the ark was at rest, there was seen that miraculously bright light, called the Shekinah, which was the token of the presence of the Most High God. The lid of the ark, as you will remember was called the mercy-seat. The whole ark was one of the most sacred things in the symbolic worship of the Jews because if they understood aright, it was to them the expression of God's dwelling with them, for where that ark was, God specially rested. Its lid being called the mercy seat, was the representation of Jesus Christ who is our ark--the ark of the covenant in which God dwelt among men, and he is our mercy-seat by whom we have access to our Father, God. You will remember that after this ark was made in the wilderness, it was carefully kept in the secret place of the tabernacle, into which no man

ever entered, except the high priest once in the year; and, then, not without blood. With his censor smoking, he made a thick cloud of incense, and then sprinkling the blood upon the mercy-seat, he ventured near to it--but not without blood. That ark when it was removed was covered over, so that no human eye should ever see it; and it was carried by golden staves upon the shoulders of the Levites. It was by the presence of this ark that Jordan was driven back, and an easy passage was made for the children of Israel, when they entered into Canaan. The ark was in an evil day captured by the Philistines. But when they took it away into their country, wherever the ark went, it smote the Philistines with pestilence, until they were compelled to bring it back, for they cried, "Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city, the hand of God was very heavy there." Placing the terrible captive upon a new cart, they left the oxen to bear it as they pleased, and by divine providence the ark was carried to Beth-shemesh. The men of Beth-shemesh struck with an evil curiosity, lifted up the lid and looked therein, and there fell many thousands of them dead for the impious presumption. The ark was then removed to Kirjath-jearim, and taken into the house of Abinadab, where it was preserved till the days of David, who desired to bring it up to the tabernacle which he had erected for it on the top of Mount Zion. The messengers hastened through all the land carrying the royal message, "Come up, ye tribes of Israel, and ye sons of Judah, gather yourselves together, and bring up the ark of the covenant of your God with music and with joy." They came from every city, from the remotest ends of Judea, and from the borders of Egypt. But forgetful of the divine law, they took up the ark and put it on a new car or chariot which they had made for it. They thought, doubtless, it was too heavy

for the priests to carry so many miles; or else, forgetful altogether of the divine law, they imitated the example of the Philistines. It is an evil hour for the people of God, when they set up their own judgment, and fail to yield implicit obedience to divine law. The ark is dragged by the oxen; but as there are no roads in the East, but only here and there a cart rut, the cart shakes, and the ark totters. Just when they come to the threshing floor of Chidon, there is a peculiarly boggy place in the road, and the car is almost upset; the ark is about to fall in the mire, so Uzzah thinks, and he puts out his hand, touches the ark to stop it, is rent in pieces, and falls a mangled corpse. The procession stops. They begin to weep; they cast dust mto the air; the king himself is angry, angry with his God. He thinks he is dealing hardly with them; and the ark is taken into Obed-edom's house, and all their joy is suspended.

You have before you now the picture. I shall want you to look at it, first, in detail, to bring out certain truths which I think it teaches to us; and then, I shall want you to regard the picture as a whole, to run your eye along the whole length of the canvas, and sea the fullness of its meaning.

I. First, then, we shall take THE PICTURE IN ITS DETAIL.

1. The first observation I make upon it is this, that God's judgment of sin must differ exceedingly from ours. Who among us when be has read this narrative has not thought that Uzzah was treated hardly? What! was he not actuated with a proper motive? He could not bear the idea that the ark should fall into the mire, and therefore he put out his hand. Why, to our mode of thinking, it seemed to be but a small offense, and the motive so excellent that it might almost be justified. I am sure there is a disposition in us to excuse Uzzah, and to think that this judgment which came upon him was not deserved. Let me remark here, that

I am not sure Uzzah suffered any eternal punishment as the result of it. Perhaps, he was a gracious man; and God, may smite even his own children with death as a chastisement, and yet their souls may he saved eternally. We have nothing to look at except what God did with him in this world. He struck him dead in this world for touching the ark. Verily, my brethren, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. We cannot readily perceive the evil, but there was sin or else he would not have punished it. He is too good, too just to smite any man more severely than he deserves. God never exaggerates our sins. He looks at them as they are. And what think you, my hearers, if the mere sin of touching the ark brought death upon the man, what would our sins have brought on us if God had "laid justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet?" Why, we have all of us done ten thousand times worse than Uzzah. Nay, some of you are living in the commission of sin to this very day. You have never repented of your sins, but you love your evil ways, and, though warned many times, (not like Uzzah, who was taken away with a stroke,) though warned many times, you still persevere in your iniquities. Oh, must not God's patience be pressed down under your sins? Must he not have become as Amos hath it, like a cart that is full of sheaves, the axles whereof are ready to break? and then you sink and sink for ever into the pit of eternal wrath. It seems strange that Eve's taking the apple should be the ruin of the entire world; that the mere violation of a sacred tree should bring death into the world, with all its train of woe. But this arises from the fact that we do not know how black a thing sin is. The least sin is so great an evil, so excessively black an abomination, that God were just if he smote us all to hell the moment we had thought an idle thought, or had uttered a single wrong word. Sin is an immeasurable evil. Man cannot weigh it. It is a gulf without a bottom. It is a desperate evil, the desperateness

of which we shall never know, unless, as God forbid, we should ever come to feel its terror in the pit of hell.

I think this lesson lies upon the very surface of the narrative, that we do not know how bad a thing sin is, for if the mere act of touching the ark brought death on Uzzah, what a desperate evil sin must be!

2. But, again, we learn, in the second place, from this narrative--that all changes from the written revelation of God are wrong. There has sprung up in the Church of Christ an idea that there are many things taught in the Bible which are not essential; that we may alter them just a little to suit our convenience: that provided we are right in the fundamentals, the other things are of no concern and of no value whatever. Now, look at our picture, and let your mistake for ever be driven away. It did seem to the people of Israel but a very indifferent matter whether the ark was carried on men's shoulders, or whether it was dragged upon a cart. Why, they said, "It cannot matter. It is true God has told us that it is to be borne by the Levites, but what does that signify as long as it is carried? It will be all right. We will do the thing, and if we alter the mode, it will not signify very materially." Yes, but it did signify, for it was through this alteration which they made in God's law that the ark first began to shake, and to totter, and then Uzzah was tempted to put forth his hand and touch it. So that the death of Uzzah was the punishment upon the whole people for having neglected to observe the minute laws of God in every particular. My brethren, when Moses built the tabernacle, he was not left to build it after his own whim And taste. Every tache and every loop, every board and every fillet, everything was marked down in the divine plan, and Moses must build everything according to the pattern which he had seen in the Mount. Now, this is the pattern for a Christian--this book of God which lies before me. The New Testament of

our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is our only rule of practice. And ye think, do ye, that ye may alter some few things, that ye may change them to suit the climate, or to indulge your own ideas of taste or convenience? You fancy, that doctrine for instance, is not of such sublime importance--that if a man does but preach the fundamentals, he may preach any other things he likes, and yet all will be well--that ceremonies, that Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, for instance, are to be out, and hacked and fashioned, to suit modern fancies, and that they are not to be retained in their integrity according to apostolic rule and precedent? But this know, that the slightest violation of the divine law will bring judgments upon the Church, and has brought judgments, and is even at this day withholding God's hand from blessing us. For within a few years we might see all the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, if we would but carry God's ark as God would have it carried, instead of marring the gospel by human inventions, and leaving the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am not going this morning to enter into particulars, but just to lay down the general fact, that whatever God has commanded is important, and that I have no right whatever to alter anything--no, not the least thing, but to take the word just as it stands, just as God has revealed it to me, to be my rule of faith and practice. Ay, but there are some of you who never read your Bibles. You have a second-hand religion which you have borrowed from other people, you do not come to this Book to drink at the fountain head. Your grandmother thought so and so, and you think the same; your great grandfather went to church or to chapel, and that is your reason for going; but you have not come to God's Word to submit your judgment to it. The reason why there are so many sects now-a-days is just this. If we all come straightway to the Bible, we

should come far nearer together than we are now. It is not likely we should all see eye to eye. You cannot make a dozen watches all tick to the same time, much less make a dozen men Al think the same thoughts. But, still, if we should all bow our thoughts to that one written Word, and would own no authority but the Bible the Church could not be divided, could not be cut in pieces as she now is. We come together when we come to the Word of God. But I am always answered when I talk about these things, "Well, but they are not essential." Who told you they were not? "Now," saith one, "we'll admit that the baptism of infants is not in the Bible, but it is not an essential thing; we may practice it, and no harm will come of it." No, sirs; you have no right to alter a word of God's command; you have no right to turn aside in any respect, or in any manner. God's doctrines are to be preached as God delivers them, and his ordinances are to be practiced after his own mode and law. Woe worth the day when God's ark is put upon the chariot and dragged by oxen, instead of being carried upon the shoulders of men, who read God's Word, and take it as it stands, and then follow out what God commands them, and will not be led by the sleeve or by the nose by any man or set of men.

Forget not this lesson brethren, for it is of the greatest importance to the Church.

3. Now, there is a third thing, and that is, that whenever the practices of Christians differ from Scripture they are sure to incur inconvenience. When the ark was carried on the shoulders of men, it did not matter whether it went up-hill or down-hill, rugged road or smooth, there was the ark carried in state like the litter of a king. But once put it on the cart--although they thought it would look better--then it went jolting here and jolting there, and threatening constantly to tumble into the mire. Whenever we alter one word of Scripture, we shall

get ourselves into trouble. We may not see it at first, but we surely shall find it out by-and-bye. A minister, for instance, thinks, "Well, now, I must not preach all the doctrines of the Gospel. it would not suit my people, there is a great deacon sitting in the green pew in the corner, there is the squire of the parish, he would not like it if I were to be too severe on him." Ah, my friend, alter one word, and you have fallen into a snare, you have entered a labyrinth, and God help you to find your way out again, for you will never be able to get through it alone. Stand to God's Word and you stand safely. Alter one dot of the i, one cross of the t, and you are nowhere at all; you are in an enemy's country, and you cannot defend yourself. When we have got Scripture to back us up we defy the world; but when we have nothing but our own whims or the work of some great preacher, or the decree of a council, or the tradition the Fathers, we are lost. we are trying to weave a rope of sand, we are building a house of cards, that must totter to the ground. The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible is the religion of Christ's Church. And until we come back to that the Church will have to suffer. She will not carry the ark up to the hill of Zion; she will not see His kingdom come, or his will done in earth as it is in heaven, till she has done with those bullocks and that new cart, and goes back to the New Testament plan of keeping consistently to the truth as it is in Jesus, and contending earnestly for the faith.

4. Furthermore, another thing lies upon the surface of this passage; namely, that one innovation upon sacred writ leads to another. A little error leads to a great one. Nobody ever intended that Uzzah should touch that ark. They had not a thought when they lifted it up and put it on the car that it would lead to poor Uzzah's death and that he would commit the sin of violating the ark, else surely they would have

kept to the Scriptural plan. So there are some of you my dear brethren in Christ who are not quite right in your views of Scripture. Well, perhaps you think the same of me. We will speak of somebody else, then. There is a man in the world, whose views are not quite in consistency with Scripture. He says, "Well, it does not matter it is a little thing, a very little thing." Yes but that little wrong thing leads to a great wrong thing. The sinner's path is down hill, and when you take one step in violation of Scripture precept, your next step is not only easy, but seems even to be forced upon you. Doubt election, you will soon doubt perseverance, and you may soon come to deny redemption. Where did the errors of the church of Rome come from? Were they all born in a day? No, they came by slow degrees. It happened thus:--I will trace but one error, against which as a denomination we always bear our protest, and I only take that as a specimen of the whole. Among the early Christians, it was the practice to baptize those who believed in Christ Jesus, by immersing them in the water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Well, the first wrong doctrine that started up, was the idea that perhaps there was some efficacy in the water. Next it followed that when a man was dying who had never been baptized he would perhaps profess faith in Christ, and ask that he might be baptized; but as he was dying they could not lift him from his bed, they therefore adopted sprinkling as being an easier method by which they might satisfy the conscience by the application of water. That done, there was but a step to the taking of little children into the church--children, unconscious infants, who were received as being members of Christ's body; and thus infant sprinkling was adopted. The error came in by slow degrees--not all at once. It would have been too glaring for the church to receive, if it had shown its head at one time with all its horns upon it. But it entered slowly and gradually, till

it came to be inducted into the church. I do not know, an error which causes the damnation of more souls than that at the present-time. There are thousands of people who firmly believe that they shall go to heaven because they were sprinkled in infancy, have been confirmed, and have taken the Sacrament. Sacramental efficacy and baptismal regeneration, all spring from the first error of infant baptism. Had they kept to the Scripture, had the church always required faith before baptism, that error could not have sprung up. It must have died before the light of the truth, it could not have breathed, it could not have had a foothold in the Christian church. But one error must lead to another--you never need doubt that. If you tamper with one truth of Scripture, he that tempts you to meddle with one, will tempt you to tamper with another, and there will be no end to it, till, at last, you will want a new Bible, a new Testament, and a new God. There is no telling where you will end when you have begun. I am speaking very pointedly and very plainly this morning, on a subject which very seldom comes in my way. But I must be clear in my language when I do speak about it, for I do not often make allusions to this truth. Judge me as I judge others. You tell me, if I make one step in error, you do not know how far I may go. I believe you. Believe me also when I say the same. Let us both go to Scripture, let us stand only by this. I like your Prayer Book well enough, but not so well as my Bible. I respect your Church decrees, but not so as I venerate this Book. I believe what your minister says, so far as it is consistent with this Book. Believe me so far, but not one inch further. Have done with me when I have done with my Master. Think no more of any man you hear, when he goes from the Scripture, and when he errs, than you would think of Satan himself; except this, pity him for his errors, but pin not your faith to his sleeve. Scripture, Scripture only, is the model doctrine, the model practice, the model

experience of a Christian; and whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil.

5. Having now dwelt upon these points, I will take one more, and then I will leave this looking at the picture in detail. It strikes me that on the very surface of this passage there is a refutation of a very common error, that if we do a thing from a right motive God accepts it, even though it is a wrong thing. The common error of the time is this, "Well," says one, "I have no doubt that if a man is a good Mahomedan, and keeps up to what he knows, he will go to heaven." "Ah," says another, " and if he is a good Roman Catholic, and if he keeps up to what he knows he is safe." "Ay," says another, "we must not judge one another harshly; no doubt those who bow before Juggernaut, if they live up to what they know will be saved." Do you take in the devil-worshippers and the snake-worshippers too? You must let them all in. You have opened your door wide enough to let them all come in. And the Thugs who are going about India cutting men's throats--they do it as a matter of principle, it is a part of their religion, they consider it to be right--do you think they will go to heaven because they have done what they thought is right? "No," says one, "I will not go that length." Yes, but if the principle is right in one case it is right in the other. A principle will go the whole way it will stretch in any direction, and be as applicable to one as to another. But it is ail deception and falsehood God has revealed to us the one true religion. and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. We are responsible to God for our faith; we are bound to believe what he tells us to believe, and our judgment is as much bound to submit to God's law as any other power of our being. When we come before God, it will be no excuse for us to say "My Lord, I did wrong, but I thought I was doing right." "Yes, but I gave you my law. but you did not read it, or, if

you read it, you read it so carelessly that you did not understand it, and then you did wrong, and you tell me you did it with a right motive. Ay, but it is of no avail whatever." Just as in Uzzah's case, did it not seem the lightest thing in the world to put out his hand to prevent the ark from slipping off? Who could blame the man? But God had commanded that no unpriestly hand should ever touch it, and inasmuch as he did touch it, though it was with a right motive, yet Uzzah must die. God will have his laws kept. Besides, my dear brethren, I am not sure about the rightness of your motives after all. The State has issued a proclamation, it is engraven, according to the old Roman fashion, in brass. A man goes up with his file, and he begins working away upon the brass, erases here, and amends there. Says he, "I did that with a right motive, I didn't think the law a good one, I thought it was too old-fashioned for these times, and so I thought I would alter it a little, and make it better for the people." Ah, how many have there been who have said, "The old puritanic principles are too rough for these times, we'll alter them, we'll tone them down a little." What are you at, sir? Who art thou that darest to touch a single letter of God's Book which God has hedged about with thunder in that tremendous sentence, wherein he has written, "Whosoever shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and whosoever shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city." It becomes an awful thing when we come to think of it, for men not to form a right and proper judgment about God's Word, for man to leave a single point in it uncanvassed, a single mandate unstudied, lest we should lead others astray, while we ourselves are acting in disobedience to God. The fact is, there is one way to heaven, and there are not fifty ways; there is one gate to heaven, and there

are not even two gates. Christ is the way. Trusting in Jesus is the path to Paradise. He that believeth not in Jesus must be damned. The religion of Christ is intolerant; not that it ever touches man in his flesh and blood, even if he rejects it, but it does not allow of a second method of salvation. It demands your full obedience, your child-like faith, or else it threatens you with the direst penalty, if you refuse to yield to it. That idea of free-thinking and the like, and the right of man to think as he likes, has no countenance in Scripture. We are bound to believe what God tells us; as he tells it to us; bound not to alter a single word, but to take the Bible as it is, or else deny it, and take the consequence.

All this seems to me to lay in the picture which we have before us of the death of Uzzah.

II. But leaving these points, which I thought to be very necessary for the warning of all Christians--for judging with charity, we cannot believe that the errors which prevail among us, can have sprung up from attention to the Word--they must have sprung up from the idea, that the little things of Christ were of no importance whatever I now come to the second point, which is to LOOK AT THE PICTURE AS A WHOLE. Here I have two pictures; one for the people of God, the other for the ungodly. I shall dwell but briefly upon the first, and at length on the second.

Brethren in Jesus, despite our mistakes--and we are mistaken in some things, God forgive us--despite our mistakes, we are one in Jesus. Yet, though one in Christ Jesus, we should not think our errors to be unimportant, but should every one of us on his knees seek divine teaching, that we may be purged from every false way, and that we may be led in the way of divine obedience, even unto the end. I am sure my brethren in Jesus, that the one object of your life, as I can say it is

the object of mine, is the bringing about the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to bring up the ark from its obscurity, into the place of glory. Every time we bend our knee, there is one prayer we never can forget:--"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, for eighteen hundred and sixty years, the church of Christ has been seeking to bring the kingdom of Christ on earth. Has it come? has it come? Yes blessed be God it has in its measure. Here in this land, and across the Atlantic, and in other nations, there are found many who love and serve our Master. But have we had full fruit for the eighteen hundred and sixty years of labor? I think not. Two hundred years after the death of Christ, I think I may say, the religion of Jesus was almost as powerful in numbers upon the face of the earth, as it is now. And all the time between--God forbid that I should say it has been wasted--has, nevertheless, been a period of going back, rather than advancing--of retreat, rather than rushing victory. Now, how is this to be accounted for? Was there not that in the religion of Christ, which would push its enemies to the very ends of the earth? Let but Paul stand up in Rome, and though after awhile, his head is severed from his body, yet the very empire of the seven hills is made to totter while he speaks. Let others of the Apostles pass the pillars of Hercules, and come to Britain, and the Druid loses his power; those who bow before bloody gods that delight in human sacrifice renounce their idolatries, and churches are founded throughout England, Ireland and Scotland. They have but to enter a country, and that country yields. It is true the martyrs bleed, and the apostles die, and the confessors are burned, but the truth lives and conquers and overcomes. Within two or three centuries, the name of Jesus is better known than that of any man, and his religion has greater power than any other on the face of the earth. And here are we,

now, sending out our missionaries everywhere, and what is the success? Thank God for what it is: it is an excellent reward for all our labor, and far more than we deserve. But there is not the power in our missionaries that there was in the apostles. Our victories of the church have not been like the victories of the olden times. Why is this? My theory to account for it is this. In the first place, the absence of the Holy Spirit in a great measure from us. But if you come to the root of it to know the reason, my fuller other answer is this:--the church has forsaken her original purity, and, therefore, she has lost her power. If once we had done with everything erroneous, if by the unanimous will of the entire body of Christ, every evil ceremony, every ceremony not ordained of Scripture were lopped off and done with, if every doctrine were rejected which is not sustained by Holy Writ; if this church were pure and glean, her path would be onward, triumphant, victorious. She would set her feet on Brahma, and crush Vishnu beneath her feet. She would say to the moon of Mahomet, "Set for ever!" She would dash from his throne the Pope; she would rend up false religions by the roots; she would sit as empress of the earth, and Christ, her husband, would reign with her, and the tabernacles of God would be among men. But we art not pure; we are not clean; we cannot bring up the ark of God. Blessed be God, it still abides in Obed-Edom's house. True religion is to be found in the hearts of God's people, and in some churches the truth is still preserved; but till the whole church shall come forth clear as the moon, fair as the sun, she will never be terrible as an army with banners.

This may seem to you to be of little consequence, but it really is a matter of life and death. I would plead with every Christian--think it over, my dear brother. When some of us preach Calvinism, and some Arminianism, we cannot both be right; it is of no use trying to think

we can be--"Yes," and "no," cannot both be true. When some of us hold a Christian free of all authority but Christ; and others hold a state church; we cannot both be right anyhow. We may be both right in the grand things, but we cannot be right in everything, one or other of us must be wrong. When some sprinkle the infant, and others baptize the believer, we cannot both be right; it is idle for us to think so.

Christ has not made a nondescript religion, that will hold all sorts of people in it, and yet all shall be alike obedient. Truth does not vacillate like the pendulum which shakes backwards and forwards. It is not like the comet, which is here, there, and everywhere. One must be right, the other wrong. It is not for me to pronounce who is right, or who is wrong. I am not infallible. It is for me to judge of Scripture, as in the sight of God, for myself. I beg you do the same, Do not think any error to be an unimportant one, but try the spirits, prove whether these things are so. I am quite sure that the best way to promote union is to promote truth. It will not do for us to be all united together by yielding to one another's mistakes. We are to be united heartily, I hope we are. We are to love each other in Christ; but we are not to be so united that we are not able to see each other's faults, and especially not able to see our own. No, purge the house of God, and then shall grand and blessed times dawn on us.

And now; having done with that subject, I turn to those of you who are not converted, but who are longing to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached. I think what I have already said to be important, but this last part of the service is all-important. My dear hearer, I will suppose that in your heart there is an anxious desire to be saved, but you do not understand the plan of salvation: I grieve for you; for if you do not understand it, even though you seek Christ, you will make many mistakes, and you will suffer much inconvenience. It was a right

thing in David to wish to bring up the ark, but perhaps he was ignorant of the way to bring it, and see what inconvenience he had to suffer: the ark was jolted, the oxen shook it. Now if you are not clear as to the plan of salvation, you will have many jottings, much shaking, many doubts, many fears. Let me ask and intreat you, then, to search the Scriptures; for in therein ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ; and let me beg you to endeavor, by God's help, ever to keep in your mind a clear view of the fact, that you are to be saved, if saved at all, by trusting in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ alone. The plan of salvation is, "Trust in Jesus." Make mistakes about other things, you will suffer inconvenience; but make a mistake here, and it will be fatal to you. Methinks I hear some man saying, "Sir, I have longed to be saved, but I am still uneasy and troubled in my mind, I think if I were to do good works, and then to save myself by them, I might trust in Christ." Stand back, Uzzah, stand back, thou art about to touch the ark of God, beware, lest thou shouldst die while thou art doing it other mistakes will make you uneasy; that mistake will be fatal to you. Touch the atonement of Jesus Christ, and there is no salvation if you touch it with a legal hand, seeking to add to it your own self righteousness.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

He wants no help from you; leave him to do it all; take him as he is, and go to him just as you are; do not seek to bring anything, but go as you are, and you will be saved. Seek to help Christ, and saved you cannot be. Until you have done with that thought, you must abide in your sorrow, and in your death. No mixing with Jesus; he never came to be a make-weight. Christ must be all, and you must be nothing at all. If you attempt to patch his perfect robe that robe shall never cover

your nakedness. It is begemmed with jewels; put one paste jewel of yours upon it, and it is not yours. You must have a whole Christ, and nothing but Christ. You know the old proverb, "Betwixt the two stools he came to the ground." When a man hopes to rely partly on Christ, and partly on himself, he will come to the ground with a vengeance. Rest on Jesus simply, and you are saved; rest on Christ and self, and you are like Uzzah, you have touched the ark, you have sought to mingle man's works with God's works, man's merits with Christ's merits; and tremble, lest the wrath of God should come forth against you, and destroy you. But after all, my dear friends, you have no merits. Christ freely offers himself to you, if you will take him for nothing. You thought to buy him with your merits. Why you have no merits. Shall I tell you a little parable which shall show you your position. There was a rich man who had a generous heart, and once upon a time he resolved to give a large estate to a poor neighbor, so he sent for him, and said, "My friend, I am willing to give you a large estate for nothing." The man felt grateful and retired home, but as he lay in his bed he thought, "I should like that estate, but I should not like to be beholden to anybody for it; I think I will pay for it." So he set out the next morning with a heavy bag on his back, and when he came to the rich man's door and the friend came out, he said, "Sir, I value your estate very highly; you promised to let me have it for nothing, but I do not want to be obliged to you, so I have brought a bag all full of gold to buy it with." The rich man said, "I never offered to sell it to you; I said I would give it to you; but come, let us look at your bag of gold." So the poor man opened wide the mouth of the sack; he blushed and stammered, and said, "Oh sir, be not angry with me; now I come to look at it; it is nothing but a bag of silver." The friend said, "Look at it again." He looked again and blushed, and cried, "Let not my lord

be angry, but I find it is nothing but a bag of copper." "Look once more," said he. He looked once more into it, and he fell down on his knees, and said, "Forgive me, forgive me; I find, sir, it is a bag of filth. You see I have brought you a bag of filth with which to buy your rich estate." You know the meaning of that parable, do you not? You have brought to God what you thought were good works, golden works; look at them you will see them pale before you, and you will say, "My Lord, they are not so good as I thought they were, they are only silver works after all." Look at them again, and they will become dirty, frown, copper works. "Oh!" say you, "they are not worth more than a farthing now." Look again, and you will see that your prayers, your tears, your good works, are nothing better than filth after all. They are only another form of sin, another shape of iniquity. Oh! sinner, take Christ as he is; take him now, just as thou art. The gospel is just this--trust Christ and you are saved. Rely on what he did, and you are delivered. Just leave off trusting to any ceremonies, to any doctrines, to any forms, to any works, but rely on Jesus and you are saved. "Well," says one, "but if I go on in sin." You cannot go on in sin after you have relied on Jesus, that will stop you, nothing else can; but faith will. "No," says another, "but I have nothing in the world; no reason why I should be saved, I have no good thing." Just so, I know you have not; but still you are told to trust Jesus whether you have any good thing or not. Methinks I hear some one say, "I must not trust Jesus, I have no right to do it." But, my dear friend, you are commanded to do it. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." This is the commandment, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Is not this the very gospel--"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?" Now what God commends me to do I have a right to do; it cannot be wrong for me to do what God tells me to do. The minister,

who tells a man he has his right found in his own sense of need, makes the sinner look to himself; but if he tells him, "Feel or not feel, God has commanded you to believe," that makes the sinner turn to Christ and Christ only, this turns his eye from himself to the Savior.

To conclude, I will tell you a little anecdote which I have often told before; it brings to your mind more clearly than any other means, your right to believe in Christ. I am speaking to those who say, "I have no right to trust Christ." But if Christ commands you to do it, and if moreover he tells you, "you are condemned already because you do not believe," you certainly have a right to believe. Sitting one day in Court with a Judge, interesting myself with some trials that were going on, there was wanted a witness. I am not clear about his name, but I think it was Brown. So it was said from the Bench that Brown was wanted next. The usher down in the Court cried out "Brown!" Some one nearer the door cried, "Brown! " and I could hear them calling out in the street two or three times, "Brown! Brown I Brown!" The Court was very crowded. By-and-bye there came in at the Court door with a great deal of difficulty, a little, ugly, mean-looking creature. He came pushing and elbowing his way. There was a fine tall gentleman standing in the Court, looking on. He did not like to be pushed about, and he said in a very peremptory manner, "Who are you?" "Brown," said the man, "I am Brown." " Well," but said the other, "Who is Brown?" " Nobody," said he, "only I was told to come." It was wonderful how everybody made way for Brown, because he was told to come. They just cleared a lane for him and I do not suppose for my lord and duke they would have made room--they were so tightly packed: but Brown must come in anyhow, because he was wanted. It did not matter how poor he looked, how ragged, how greasy, how dirty, Brown was wanted and he had a right to come. So now, God commands you to trust Christ. But you say, "There is

a great big sin standing up." And he says, "Who are you?" You say, "A poor sinner." "And what is a poor sinner?" says he. "Nothing at all," you say; "but Jesus Christ told me to trust in him. If he is wrong I leave the blame with him, I will not keep back from him." He says, "Leap into my arms." I am at the top of a burning house, he cries, "leap, and I will catch you." Then down I go. Dashed to pieces, or saved; I have no other way of salvation--down I go into his arms. I am sinking, the floods are ready to swallow me up. Christ says, "Lay hold of that rope." It looks a frail rope, but I lay hold of it. Sink or swim I will not lay hold of anything else, but that and that alone, and I am safe. Do that, poor sinner, whoever you may be, if you have not entered a place of worship for the last six months, trust Christ now. Now, I beseech you, while the accepted hour is here, may God the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Christ; and, though you have come in here covered with sin, you may go out with your sin washed away, peace and joy in your heats, because the Spirit of God has sweetly led you to trust Jesus and you are saved.

May God now add his blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

NO. 308

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 15TH, 1860,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

The Parable Of The Sower -- "And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." -- Luke 8:4-8

In Our country, when a sower goes forth to his work, he generally enters into an enclosed field, and scatters the seed from his basket along every ridge and furrow; but in the East, the corn-growing country, hard by a small town, is usually an open area. It is divided into different properties, but there are no visible divisions, except the ancient landmarks, or perhaps ridges of stones. Through these open lands there are footpaths, the most frequented being called the highways. You must not imagine these highways to be like our macadamized roads; they are merely paths, trodden tolerably hard. Here and there you notice bye-ways, along which travelers who wish to avoid the public road may journey with a little more safety when the main road is infested with robbers: hasty travelers also strike out short cuts for themselves, and so open fresh tracks for others. When the

sower goes forth to sow he finds a plot of round scratched over with the primitive Eastern plough; he aims at scattering his seed there most plentifully; but a path runs through the center of his field, and unless he is willing to leave a broad headland, he must throw a handful upon it. Yonder, a rock crops out in the midst of the ploughed land, and the seed falls on its shallow soil. Here is a corner full of the roots of nettles and thistles, and he flings a little here; the corn and the nettles come up together, and the thorns being the stronger soon choke the seed, so that it brings forth no fruit unto perfection. The recollection that the Bible was written in the East, and that its metaphors and allusions must be explained to us by Eastern travelers, will often help us to understand a passage far better than if we think of English customs.

The preacher of the gospel is like the sower. He does not make his seed; it is given him by his divine Master. No man could create the smallest grain that ever grew upon the earth, much less the celestial seed of eternal life. The minister goes to his Master in secret, and asks him to teach him his gospel, and thus he fills his basket with the good seed of the kingdom. He then goes forth in his Master's name and scatters precious truth. If he knew where the best soil was to be found, perhaps he might limit himself to that which had been prepared by the plough of conviction; but not knowing men's hearts, it is his business to preach the gospel to every creature -- to throw a handful on the hardened heart, and another on the mind which is overgrown with the cares and pleasures of the world. He has to leave the seed in the care of the Lord who gave it to him, for he is not responsible for the harvest, he is only accountable for the care and industry with which he does his work. If no single ear should ever make glad the reaper, the sower will be rewarded by His Master if he had planted the right seed

with careful hand. If it were not for this fact with what despairing agony should we utter the cry of Esaias, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Our duty is not measured by the character of our hearers, but by the command of our God. We are bound to preach the gospel, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear. It is ours to sow beside all waters. Let men's hearts be what they may the minister must preach the gospel to them; he must sow the seed on the rock as well as in the furrow, on the highway as well as in the ploughed field. I shall now address myself to the four classes of hearers mentioned in our Lord's parable. We have, first of all, those who are represented by the way-side, those who are "hearers only"; then those represented by the stony-ground; these are transiently impressed, but the word produces no lasting fruit; then, those among thorns, on whom a good impression is produced, but the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of the world choke the seed; and lastly, that small class -- God be pleased to multiply it exceedingly -- that small class of good-ground hearers, in whom the Word brings forth abundant fruit.

I. First of all, I address myself to those hearts which are like the Way-Side -- "Some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." Many of you do not go to the place of worship desiring a blessing. You do not intend to worship God, or to be affected by anything that you hear. You are like the highway, which was never intended to be a cornfield. If a single grain of truth should fall into your heart and grow it would be as great a wonder as for corn to grow up in the street. If the seed shall be dexterously scattered, some of it will fall upon you, and rest for a while upon your thoughts. 'Tis true you will not understand it; but, nevertheless, if it be

placed before you in an interesting style, you will talk about it till some more congenial entertainment shall attract you. Even this slender benefit is brief, for in a little season you will forget all that you have heard. Would to God we could hope that our words would tarry with you, but we cannot hope it, for the soil of your heart is so hard beaten by continual traffic, that there is no hope of the seed finding a living root-hold. Satan is constantly passing over your heart with his company of blasphemies, lusts, lies, and vanities. The chariots of pride roll along it, and the feet of greedy mammon tread it till it is hard as adamant. Alas! For the good seed, it finds not a moment's respite; crowds pass and repass; in fact, your soul is an exchange, across which continually hurry the busy feet of those who make merchandise of the souls of men. You are buying and selling, but you little think that you are selling the truth, and that you are buying your soul's destruction. You have no time, you say, to think of religion. No, the road of your heart is such a crowded thoroughfare, that there is no room for the wheat to spring up. If it did begin to germinate, some rough foot would crush the green blade ere it could come to perfection. The seed has occasionally lain long enough to begin to sprout, but just then a new place of amusement has been opened, and you have entered there, and as with an iron heel, the germ of life that was in the seed was crushed out. Corn could not grow in Cornhill or Cheapside, however excellent the seed might be: your heart is just like those crowded thoroughfares; for so many cares and sins throng it, and so many proud, vain, evil, rebellious thoughts against God pass through it, that the seed of truth cannot grow. We have looked at this hard road-side, let us now describe what becomes of the good word, when it falls upon such a heart. It would have grown if it had fallen on right soil, but it has dropped into the wrong place, and it remains as dry as

when it fell from the sower's hand. The word of the gospel lies upon the surface of such a heart, but never enters it. Like the snow, which sometimes falls upon our streets, drops upon the wet pavement, melts, and is gone at once, so is it with this man. The word has not time to quicken in his soul: it lies there an instant, but it never strikes root, or takes the slightest effect. Why do men come to hear if the word never enters their hearts? That has often puzzled us. Some hearers would not be absent on the Sunday on any account; they are delighted to come up with us to worship, but yet the tear never trickles down their cheek, their soul never mounts up to heaven on the wings of praise, nor do they truly join in our confessions of sin. They do not think of the wrath to come, nor of the future state of their souls. Their heart is as iron; the minister might as well speak to a heap of stones as preach to them. What brings these senseless sinners here? Surely we are as hopeful of converting lions and leopards as these untamed, insensible hearts. Oh feeling! Thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason! Do these people come to our assemblies because it is respectable to attend a place of worship? Or is it that their coming helps to make them comfortable in their sins? If they stopped away conscience would prick them; but they come hither that they may flatter themselves with the notion that they are religious. Oh! My hearers, your case is one that might make an angel weep! How sad to have the sun of the gospel shining on your faces, and yet to have blind eyes that never see the light. The music of heaven is lost upon you, for you have no ears to hear. You can catch the turn of a phrase, you can appreciate the poetry of an illustration, but the hidden meaning, the divine life you do not perceive. You sit at the marriage-feast, but you eat not of the dainties; the bells of heaven ring with joy over ransomed spirits, but you live unransomed, without God, and without Christ. Though we

plead with you, and pray for you, and weep over you, you still remain as hardened, as careless, and as thoughtless as ever you were. May God have mercy on you, and break up your hard hearts, that his word may abide in you. We have not, however, completed the picture. The passage tells us that the fowls of the air devoured the seed. Is there here a way-side hearer? Perhaps he did not mean to hear this sermon, and when he has heard it he will be asked by one of the wicked to come into company. He will go with the tempter, and the good seed will be devoured by the fowls of the air. Plenty of evil ones are ready to take away the gospel from the heart. The devil himself, that prince of the air, is eager at any time to snatch away a good thought. And then the devil is not alone -- he has legions of helpers. He can set a man's wife, children, friends, enemies, customers, or creditors, to eat up the good seed, and they will do it effectually. Oh, sorrow upon sorrow, that heavenly seed should become devil's meat; that God's corn should feed foul birds! O my hearers, if you have heard the gospel from your youth, what wagon-loads of sermons have been wasted on you! In your younger days, you heard old Dr. So-and-so, and the dear old man was wont to pray for his hearers till his eyes were red with tears! Do you recollect those many Sundays when you said to yourself, "Let me go to my chamber and fall on my knees and pray"? But you did not: the fowls of the air ate up the seed, and you went on to sin as you had sinned before. Since then, by some strange impulse, you are very rarely absent from God's house; but now the seed of the gospel falls into your soul as if it dropped upon an iron floor, and nothing comes of it. The law may be thundered at you; you do not sneer at it, but it never affects you. Jesus Christ may be lifted up; his dear wounds may be exhibited; his streaming blood may flow before your very eyes, and you may be bidden with all earnestness to look to him and live; but it is as if

one should sow the sea-shore. What shall I do for you? Shall I stand here and rain tears upon this hard highway? Alas! My tears will not break it up; it is trodden too hard for that. Shall I bring the gospel plough? Alas! The ploughshare will not enter ground so solid. What shall we do? O God, thou knowest how to melt the hardest heart with the precious blood of Jesus. Do it now, we beseech thee, and thus magnify thy grace, by causing the good seed to live, and to produce a heavenly harvest.

II. I shall now turn to the second class of hearers: -- "And some fell upon a Rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture." You can easily picture to yourselves that piece of rock in the midst of the field thinly veiled with soil; and of course the seed falls there as it does everywhere else. It springs up, it hastens to grow, it withers, it dies. None but those who love the souls of men can tell what hopes, what joys, and what bitter disappointments these stony places have caused us. We have a class of hearers whose hearts are hard, and yet they are apparently the softest and most impressible of men. While other men see nothing in the sermon, these men weep. Whether you preach the terrors of the law or the love of Calvary, they are alike stirred in their souls, and the liveliest impressions are apparently produced. Such may be listening now. They have resolved, but they have procrastinated. They are not the sturdy enemies of God who clothe themselves in steel, but they seem to bare their breasts, and lay them open to the minister. Rejoiced in heart, we shoot our arrows there, and they appear to penetrate; but, alas, a secret armor blunts every dart, and no wound is felt. The parable speaks of this character thus -- "Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had

no deepness of earth." Or as another passage explains it: "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." Have we not thousands of hearers who receive the word with joy? They have no deep convictions, but they leap into Christ on a sudden, and profess an instantaneous faith in him, and that faith has all the appearance of being genuine. When we look at it, the seed has really sprouted. There is a kind of life in it, there is apparently a green blade. We thank God that a sinner is brought back, a soul is born to God. But our joy is premature: they sprang up on a sudden, and received the word with joy, because they had no depth of earth, and the self-same cause which hastened their reception of the seed also causes them, when the sun is risen with his fervent heat, to wither away. These men we see every day in the week. They come to join the church; they tell us a story of how they heard us preach on such-and-such an occasion, and, oh, the word was so blessed to them, they never felt so happy in their lives! "Oh sir, I thought I must leap from my seat when I heard about a precious Christ, and I believed on him there and then; I am sure I did." We question them as to whether they were ever convinced of sin. They think they were; but one thing they know, they feel a great pleasure in religion. We put it to them, "Do you think you will hold on?" They are confident that they shall. They hate the things they once loved, they are sure they do. Everything has become new to them. And all this is on a sudden. We enquire when the good work began. We find it began when it ended, that is to say, there was no previous work, no ploughing of the soil, but on a sudden they sprang from death to life, as if a field should be covered with wheat by magic. Perhaps

we receive them into the church; but in a week or two they are not so regular as they used to be. We gently reprove them, and they explain that they meet with such opposition in religion, that they are obliged to yield a little. Another month and we lose them altogether. The reason is that they have been laughed at or exposed to a little opposition, and they have gone back. And what, think you, are the feelings of the minister? He is like the husbandman, who sees his field all green and flourishing, but at night a frost nips every shoot, and his hoped-for gains are gone. The minister goes to his chamber, and casts himself on his face before God, and cries, "I have been deceived; my converts are fickle, their religion has withered as the green herb." In the ancient story Orpheus is said to have had such skill upon the lyre, that he made the oaks and stones to dance around him. It is a poetical fiction, and yet hath it sometimes happened to the minister, that not only have the godly rejoiced, but men, like oaks and stones, have danced from their places. Alas! They have been oaks and stones still. Hushed is the lyre. The oak returns to its rooting-place, and the stone casts itself heavily to the earth. The sinner, who, like Saul, was among the prophets, goes back to plan mischief against the Most High. If it is bad to be a wayside hearer, I cannot think it is much better to be like the rock. This second class of hearers certainly gives us more joy than the first. A certain company always comes round a new minister; and I have often thought it is an act of God's kindness that he allows these people to gather at the first, while the minister is young, and has but few to stand by him: these persons are easily moved, and if the minister preaches earnestly they feel it, and they love him, and rally round him, much to his comfort. But time, that proves all things, proves them. They seemed to be made of true metal; but when they are put into the fire to be tested, they are consumed in

the furnace. Some of the shallow kind are here now. I have looked at you when I have been preaching, and I have often thought, "That man one of these days will come out from the world, I am sure he will." I have thanked God for him. Alas, he is the same as ever. Years and years have we sowed him in vain, and it is to be feared it will be so to the end, for he is without depth, and without the moisture of the Spirit. Shall it be so? Must I stand over the mouth of your open sepulcher, and thin, "Here lies a shoot which never became an ear, a man in whom grace struggled but never reigned, who gave some hopeful spasms of life and then subsided into eternal death"? God save you! Oh! May the Spirit deal with you effectually, and may you, even you, yet bring forth fruit unto God, that Jesus may have a reward for his sufferings.

III. I shall briefly treat of the third class, and may the Spirit of God assist me to deal faithfully with you. "And some fell among Thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it." Now, this was good soil. The two first characters were bad: the wayside was not the proper place, the rock was not a congenial situation for the growth of any plant; but this is good soil, for it grows thorns. Wherever a thistle will spring up and flourish, there would wheat flourish too. This was fat, fertile soil; it was no marvel therefore that the husbandman dealt largely there, and threw handful after handful upon that corner of the field. See how happy he is when in a month or two he visits the spot. The seed has sprung up. True, there's a suspicious little plant down there of about the same size as the wheat. "Oh!" he thinks, "that's not much, the corn will out-grow that. When it is stronger it will choke these few thistles that have unfortunately mixed with it." Ay, Mr. Husbandman, you do not understand the force of evil, or you would not thus dream! He comes again, and the seed has grown, there is even the

corn in the ear; but the thistles, the thorns, and the briars have become intertwisted with one another, and the poor wheat can hardly get a ray of sunshine. It is so choked with thorns every way, that it looks quite yellow: the plant is starved. Still it perseveres in growing, and it does seem as if it would bring forth a little fruit. Alas, it never comes to anything. With it the reaper never fills his arm. We have this class very largely among us. These hear the word and understand what they hear. They take the truth home; they think it over; they even go the length of making a profession of religion. The wheat seems to spring and ear; it will soon come to perfection. Be in no hurry, these men and women have a great deal to see after; they have the cares of a large concern; their establishment employs so many hundred hands; do not be deceived as to their godliness -- they have no time for it. They will tell you that they must live; that they cannot neglect this world; that they must anyhow look out for the present, and as for the future, they will render it all due attention by-and-by. They continue to attend gospel-preaching, and the poor little stunted blade of religion keeps on growing after a fashion. Meanwhile they have grown rich, they come to the place of worship in a carriage, they have all that heart can wish. Ah! Now the seed will grow, will it not? No, no. They have no cares now; the shop is given up, they live in the country; they have not to ask, "Where shall the money come from to meet the next bill?" or "how shall they be able to provide for an increasing family." Now they have too much instead of too little, for they have riches, and they are too wealthy to be gracious. "But," says one, "they might spend their riches for God." Certainly they might, but they do not, for riches are deceitful. They have to entertain much company, and chime in with the world, and so Christ and his church are left in the lurch. Yes, but they begin to spend their riches, and they have surely got over that

difficulty, for they give largely to the cause of Christ, and they are munificent in charity; the little blade will grow, will it not? No, for now behold the thorns of pleasure. Their liberality to others involves liberality to themselves; their pleasures, amusements, and vanities choke the wheat of true religion: the good grains of gospel truth cannot grow because they have to attend that musical party, that ball, and that soiree, and so they cannot think of the things of God. I know several specimens of this class. I knew one, high in court circles, who has confessed to me that he wished he were poor, for then he might enter the kingdom of heaven. He has said to me, "Ah! Sir, these politics, these politics, I wish I were rid of them, they are eating the life out of my heart; I cannot serve God as I would." I know of another, overloaded with riches, who has said to me, "Ah! Sir, it is an awful thing to be rich; one cannot keep close to the Savior with all this earth about him." Ah! My dear readers, I will not ask for you that God may lay you on a bed of sickness, that he may strip you of all your wealth, and bring you to beggary; but, oh, if he were to do it, and you were to save your souls, it would be the best bargain you could ever make. If those mighty ones who now complain that the thorns choke the seed could give up all their riches and pleasures, if they that fare sumptuously every day could take the place of Lazarus at the gate, it were a happy change for them if their souls might be saved. A man may be honorable and rich, and yet go to heaven; but it will be hard work, for "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." God does make some rich men enter the kingdom of heaven, but hard is their struggle. Steady, young man, steady! Hurry not to climb to wealth! It is a place where many heads are turned. Do not ask God to make you popular; they that have popularity are wearied by it. Cry with Agur -- "Give me

neither poverty nor riches." God give me to tread the golden mean, and may I ever have in my heart that good seed, which shall bring forth fruit a hundredfold to his own glory.

IV. I now close with the last character, namely, the Good Ground. Of the good soil, as you will mark, we have but one in four. Will one in four of our hearers, with well-prepared heart, receive the Word? The ground is described as "good": not that it was good by nature, but it had been made good by grace. God had ploughed it; he had stirred it up with the plough of conviction, and there it lay in ridge and furrow as it should lie. When the gospel was preached, the heart received it, for the man said, "That is just the blessing I want. Mercy is what a needy sinner requires." So that the preaching of the gospel was THE thing to give comfort to this disturbed and ploughed soil. Down fell the seed to take good root. In some cases it produced fervency of love, largeness of heart, devotedness of purpose of a noble kind, like seed which produces a hundredfold. The man became a mighty servant for God, he spent himself and was spent. He took his place in the vanguard of Christ's army, stood in the hottest of the battle, and did deeds of daring which few could accomplish -- the seed produced a hundredfold. It fell into another heart of like character; -- the man could not do the most, but still he did much. He gave himself to God, and in his business he had a word to say for his Lord; in his daily walk he quietly adorned the doctrine of God his Savior, -- he brought forth sixty-fold. Then it fell on another, whose abilities and talents were but small; he could not be a star, but he would be a glow-worm; he could not do as the greatest, but he was content to do something, however humble. The seed had brought forth in him tenfold, perhaps twentyfold. How many are there of this sort here? Is there one who

prays within himself, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? The seed has fallen in the right spot. Soul, thy prayer shall be heard. God never sets a man longing for mercy without intending to give it. Does another whisper, "Oh that I might be saved"? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou, even thou, shalt be saved. Hast thou been the chief of sinners? Trust Christ, and thy enormous sins shall vanish as the millstone sinks beneath the flood. Is there no one here that will trust the Savior? Can it be possible that the Spirit is entirely absent? That he is not moving in one soul? Not begetting life in one spirit? We will pray that he may now descend, that the word may not be in vain.

Chapter 22

Full Redemption

A Sermon

(No. 309)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 22nd, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"There shall not a hoof be left behind."--Exodus 10:26.

THE CONTROVERSY between Jehovah, the God of the whole earth, and Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was intended to be remembered, and spoken of throughout all generations. On that occasion, God permitted human nature to arrive at its highest degree of stubbornness and obstinacy; but he, nevertheless, cowed it, and overcame it. He did indeed raise up Pharaoh for this purpose, that he might show forth his power in him. Pharaoh, as an absolute monarch, is permitted to go to the utmost degree of hardness of heart, and yet the Lord would show to all coming generations that his decrees shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. You will remember that the quarrel was on this wise--God had sent his people into Egypt in the olden times, there to dwell in the land of Goshen. They had multiplied exceedingly, they had been favourably treated by succeeding kings, till at length a new king arose who knew not Joseph. He began to oppress the people, but the more he oppressed hem, the more they increased. He made their lives bitter with hard bondage. In mortar and in rick, and ina ll manner of service of the field, did he make hem to serve with rigour. Probably they were employed in building many of those mighty piles, the pyramids, which now stand upon the plains of Egypt. He subjected hem to the most rigorous tasks; they worked under the whip continually, and had to make

bricks without straw, the hardest possible exaction that even a tyrant could have imagined. At last the cry of the people went up to their God in heaven. He saw their affliction, he heard their cry, he knew their sorrows, and he determined, with his own bare arm, to be avenged on Pharaoh, and to bring out all his people, the seed of Jacob, from their house of bondage. He raised up Moses, and he sent him in with this message to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go, that they may serve me." Pharaoh laughs at it; "Ye are idle," saith he, "ye are idle, ye shall not go." A plague at once is God's answer to Pharaoh's laughter; he turns their water into blood, and the fish that was in the river died. Pharaoh gives way a little; for, if he must yield, it must be by degrees. "You shall have," says he, "two or three days of rest, to serve your God, but it must be in this land." "Nay," says Moses, "We cannot serve our God in this land, we must go forth into the wilderness." Pharaoh bids them begone. Another plague, and yet another. And now Pharaoh yields thus far. "They may go into the wilderness, but they must not go very far." "Nay, but," says Moses, "we will have no such stipulation." Pharaoh, therefore, again deals deceitfully, again refuses, again grows angry, and waxes proud; and God smites the land with lice, with flies, with a very grievous murrain, with all manner of plagues. Then Pharaoh says, "You may go, you may go into the wilderness; but only the strong men among you shall go; ye shall leave your wives, and your little ones." "Nay," says Moses, "we must all go, with our wives, and with our little ones, must we serve the Lord our God." Pharaoh again refuses; his heart is hardened; he will not yield. Moses, at the command of the Lord, then stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt, even darkness that might be felt. Then Pharaoh's subjects clamoured to him, "Let these men go." Pharaoh yields this, "For," he says, "You shall go,

your wives, and your little ones, but you shall leave your cattle and your goods behind." "Nay," saith Moses, "We must have all or none; not a hoof shall be left behind." Not a single sheep shall stay in Egypt; the whole of God's host, and all they have, their sick, their young, their aged, and all their possessions must go forth out of Egypt. And you will remember, that the Lord never yielded a single point to Pharaoh, but exacted all of him, and at last buried him with his horses, and his riders, in he depths of the sea.

Now, it seems to me, that this grand quarrel of old is but a picture of God's continual contest with the powers of darkness. The mandate has gone forth to earth and hell: "Thus saith the Lord, let my people go that they may serve me." "No," saith Satan, "they shall not." And if he be compelled to yield one point, he still retains his hold upon another. If he must give way, it shall be inch by inch. Evil is hard in dying; it will not readily be overcome. But this is the demand of God, and to he last will he have it. "All my people;" the whole of, ever one of them, and all that my people have possessed, all shall come out of the land of Egypt. Christ will have the whole; he will not be contented with a part, and this he vows to accomplish. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

I think you will now see the drift of the discourse. I use the text as an aphorism, which I hope to be enabled to illustrate. God bless it to our souls. "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Christ will have all that he has died to purchase; all that he has bought with blood he will have; not a fraction of the purchased possession will he lose.

First then, Christ will have the whole man--"Not a single hoof shall be left behind." In the next place, he will have the whole church--"Not a single hoof shall be left behind." In the next place, he will have the whole of the lost inheritance of his church--"Not a hoof shall be left

behind;" and at last, in the fourth place, to conclude, he will have the whole world to serve him--"Not a hoof shall be left behind."

I. First, then, Christ have THE WHOLE MAN. In his people whom he has purchased with his blood, he will reign without a rival. As for the world that lieth in the wicked one, the prince of this world shall have his power over it, until his time shall be accomplished. But as for the Lord's people whom he hath redeemed, on whom his heart is set, he will not have a single hair of their heads to be alienated from himself. "They shall be mine," saith the Lord, "they shall be wholly mine." Christ will not be part-proprietor of any man; he will not have one part of the man, and leave the other part to be devoted to Satan. In entering upon this point, that Christ will have the whole man, I shall have to notice, that he does already possess the whole of his people in heir intent and purpose, and that by-and-bye, when he hath sanctified them wholly, he will hen actually possess the whole spirit, and soul, and body of the man whom he hath purchased with his precious blood. Mark then, my hearers, if you be children of God, if you be saved, you belong wholly and entirely to Christ. By this may you know this morning whether you belong wholly and entirely to Christ. By this may you know this morning whether you are subjects of that old Pharaoh, or whether Jehovah is the Lord your God and your great Deliverer. Are there not multitudes of men, who seem to imagine that if they save a corner in their souls for their religion, all will be well? Satan may stalk across the road acres of their judgment and their understanding, and he may reign over their thoughts and their imaginations; but if in some quiet nook there be preserved the appearance of religion, all will be right. Oh! Be not deceived, men and brethren, in this, Christ never went halves in a man yet. He will have the whole of you, or he will have none of you. He will be Lord paramount, Master supreme, absolute

Lord, or else he will have nothing to do with you. You may serve Satan, if you will, but when you serve him, you shall not serve Christ too. He will not permit you to have your right hand in his service, and your left hand employed for the black designs of hell. The whole man Christ died to purchase, and if you are not wholly given up to God, if in the intent and purpose of your souls, every thought, and wis, and power, and talent, and possession, be not devoted and consecrated to Christ, you have no reason to believe thatyou have been redeemed by his precious blood.

Christ will not allow us to spare a single sin. We may not select some favourite evil, and say, I will give my heart wholly up to God, but this vice is to be spared. Nay, nay, my hearers, ye are not Christ's if ye have one tampered lust, one sin which you fondly indulge. Sin you will, even though you be Christ's, but if you indulge sin, if you love it, and delight in it, if it is not to you a plague and a curse, you have no reason whatever to conclude that your name is on his breast, or that you belong to Christ at all. Suppose a house attacked by seven thieves. The good man of the house has arms within, and he manages to kill six of the thieves; but if one thief survive, and he permits him to range his house, he may still be robbed, perhaps still be slain. And if I have had seven evil vices, and if by the grace of God six of these have been driven out, should I yet indulge and pamper one that remaineth, I am still a lost man. I am not his so long as I willingly yield, and joyfully hold fellowship with a single evil and false thing.

I contend not for creature perfection; I believe it to be impossible for us to attain it in the present life, but I do contend for perfection in purpose, perfection in design; and if we wantonly and wilfully harbour a solitary sin, we are no friends of Jesus Christ. Not one sin, hen, is to be spared. And as no sin is to be spared, so no

duty is to be neglected. If I am Christ's, I am not to look down his law, and say, "Such-and-such a precept is agreeable to me, I will keep it." No, as I hate evey foolish way, so much I love every right one. "I count all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." We have not come yet to be Christ's verified property, to be Christ's disenthralled people, unless we feel that in all the commandments of God we desire to walk blamelessly,--not a hoof is to be left behind.

As no sin is to be spared, and no service to be shunned, so no power is to be reserved from entire consecration. Christ bought the whole man, and the whole man must be devoted to Christ; I am not to use my judgment for the Saviour, and let my imagination lie idle; I am not to reserve for sin the freedom of my will, while I give to God my conscience; but the whole man is to be given up, to Christ, he is not enlisted in Jesus Christ's army, who has not given up to Christ, head, and hands, and feet, and heart, and all. I am old that in Scotland, in the olden times, the farmers used to save one field which they did not sow, they saved that for the devil, it was called, "The gude man's croft;" so that Satan might range there, as much as he liked, and not disturb the crops elsewhere. A strange whim. Oh! How many Christians have tried to do the like in their hearts. They have had just the gude man's croft, a little corner where Satan might have his way, but, oh! This will never serve, the whole land must be tilled; every acre must be sown with the good seed, for it is all Christ's, or else it is none of it Christ's, we are wholly consecrated, or else unconsecrated. We belong from the crown of our head to the sole of our foot to Christ, or else we do not belong to Christ at all. Man,--the entire nature must be surrendered. The demand is imperative; to a proverb it shall be verified; "there shall not a hoof be left behind."

Yet, further, if no power is to be unconsecrated, how much less will

Christ ever permit our heart to be divided. If we seek to serve God and mammon, God and self, God and pleasure, we do not serve God at all. When the Romans erected the statue of Christ, and put it up I their pantheon, saying that he should be one among their Gods, their homage was worthless. And when hey turned their heads, first to Jupiter, then to Venus, and then to Jesus Christ, they did no honour to our Lord, they did but dishonour him. Their service was not acceptable, and so if you imagine in your heart that you can sometimes service God, and sometimes service self and be your own master, you have made a mistake. Christ will have no such service as this; he will have all or nothing; and indeed, men and brethren, it is necessary for us to escape entirely from the snares of sin, or else we cannot be saved. A quaint old divine uses the following figure: "If," saith he, "a hart be caught in a trap, and it shall extricate all its limbs except one foot, it has not escaped as long as the foot is in the trap; and if a bird be taken, and if with much struggling it getteth its liberty all but one wing, yet when the fowler comes he will seize it unless that wing also become delivered." So is it with you and me; if any part of our heart be devoted to Satan we might as well devote the whole, for we are still his bond-slaves. If you say, "Well, I was once bound hand and foot, but now I have broken off the chain from my hand." Yes, but if the ring of iron encircles one foot, and it is fastened down to the floor, you are still a slave. You may have filed through the chain of your drunkenness, but if you have not filed through the chain of your self-righteousness, you are still as much a bondman as ever. It is all in vain for you to fight half the battle; it is not the half but the whole that gives the victory. It is not the slaying of here and there a sin, like the stopping of here and there a leak in the ship; she must be re-keeled, or else she will sink; she must be new bottomed and new

made; and so must you. All those slight amendments and improvements, good as they are in a moral aspect, are worthless as to any spiritual salvation of your soul. Remember this, thou who thinkest thou art a believer, see whether it can be said of thee, "I have wholly come out of Egypt in my heart's intent, not a hoof has been left behind."'

But to proceed: what is already true in our intent and purposes shall ere long be true in reality. Tarry a little while, Christian, a few more struggles against the flesh, a little more battling and of warring against the evil powers within thee, and thou shalt put thy foot upon the neck of thy old corruptions: sin and self shall both be slain, and Jesus Christ shall reign triumphantly. What a joy it is to the Christian to believe that he shall one day be perfect. As we have worn the image of the earthy, so shall we also wear the image of the heavenly. The tongue that has spoken many an evil thing, bought with the blood of Christ, shall one day be full of the sonnets of Paradise. There shall be no strife in the soul; the Canaanite shall no more dwell in the land; we shall be vessels fully purged as by fire, fully sanctified and made fit for the Master's use. When we shall come up dripping from the shelving banks of Jordan, we shall have left behind us all our sins; up those celestial hills our feet shall climb, and our garments shall e whiter than any fuller can make them. Not Jesus in his transfiguration shall be more complete and perfect than we shall be in ours. The black drops of depravity will have been wrung out of our hearts; the virus of deep corruption shall have been extracted, and we shall take our place among the angels, pure as they; among the perfect spirits, the prophets, and the glorious host of martyrs as truly sanctified, as fully redeemed, as effectually delivered from sin, as even they are. The redemption shall be complete; "not a hoof shall be left behind."

Before I leave this point, let me remark that there is one part of man seemingly the most worthless, which we sometimes think will be left behind. The poor body! it shall be put into the grave, the worms shall hold a carnival within it, and soon it shall crumble down into a few atoms of dust; but Christ who redeemed his people, bought their flesh and their bones as well as their souls, "and not a hoof shall be left behind." Not the eye shall be left any more than the judgment, nor the arm any more than the spiritual vigour; for the Redeemer lays claim to the organs of the body as well as the faculties of the mind. He will raise from the dead the very bones of his people, and as the whole host shall go marching up behind their conquering leader, he shall cry, "Of them that thou hast given me I have lost none, not a bone in my own body has been broken, and not a bone of their bodies has been left behind." The whole man, body, soul, and spirit, all consecrated, all filled with the Spirit, shall stand before the throne and clap its hands, and sing the everlasting song of glory unto God for ever and ever. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

II. This, to proceed to the second part of our discourse, is equally true of THE WHOLE CHURCH as of the whole man--"Not a hoof shall be left behind." I never have subscribed--I think I never shall--to the doctrine of universal redemption. I believe in the limitless efficacy of the blood of Christ. I would not say, with some of the early Fathers, that a single drop of Christ's blood would have been sufficient for the redemption of the world. That seems to me to be an expression too strained, though doubtless their meaning was correct. I believe that there is efficacy enough in the blood of Christ if it be applied to the conscience to save any man and every man. But when I come to the matter of redemption it seems to me that whatever Christ's design was in dying, that design cannot be frustrated, nor by any means

disappointed. When I look at the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot imagine that such an One offering such a sacrifice, can ever be disappointed of the design of his soul. Hence I think that all whom he came on purpose to save he will save, all who were graven on the strong affections of his heart as the purchase of his blood he assuredly shall have. All that his heavenly Father gave him shall come to him. All that he chose from before the foundation of the world, he will raise up at the last day. All who were included among the members of his mystic body, when he was nailed to the tree, shall be one with him in his glorious resurrection, and "not a hoof shall be left behind." I know there are some who believe in a disappointed Christ, who affect to lament concerning Christ a design not accomplished, a frustrated cross, agonies spent in vain, blood that was poured out on the ground as water that cannot be gathered up. I believe in no such thing. God created nothing in vain, nor will I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross in vain in any sense or in any degree whatever. Not a hoof of all his purchased flock shall be left behind.

Come, then. Methinks I see before my mind's eye the countless multitudes whom Jesus bought with blood. The day shall come when their great shepherd walking in their front shall lead behind him the entire flock, and not one shall be absent. But suppose for an instant--we take that ground to see how untenable it is--suppose for an instant that one of those purchased ones should be absent; of what sort shall that one be? Suppose it to be a suffering one, one that has lain tossing on the bed of pain for many months and years, some aged disciple filled with twitchings and convulsions, who for the last few years seemed to suffer pains like those of hell though she lay on the borders of Paradise--shall she be left behind? Such a supposition impugns the love of Christ. If he left any, certainly it should not be the suffering

ones. If one should be cast away, certainly not of that martyr band who for his sake endured, nor of that pilgrim band of the despised who through much tribulation inherit the kingdom of heaven. Who then shall it be? Shall it be the strong ones that shall be lost? Imagine it so. But how were they strong? They were strengthened through Christ and yet can they perish? Such a supposition impugns the immutability of God. Did he gird them with strength one day and leave them helpless the next? What! Did God pour the full vigour of his grace into a heart and then restrain that vigour, and suffer the strong one to perish? Samson, shalt thou be lost after thou hast slain heaps upon heaps thy thousand men? Shalt thou at last die ingloriously? No, if thou diest upon earth thou shalt hear the groans of thy Philistine enemies about thee, and die, as a warrior should, in the midst of battle, an undefeated one. Shall the minister of Christ whom God has greatly blessed be deserted by the faithful God, and shall the shame of his fall ring round the world and become the jest and mockery of drunkard and harlot? God forbid; he shall keep the strong and they shall enter into life. But suppose for a minute it should be one of our weak ones, our poor friend, Mr. Feeble-Mind, or our excellent sister, Miss Despondency; suppose these must perish. Ah! then this would impugn the power of God, for then the enemy would cry, "Aha! Aha! He kept the strong, but he could not keep the weak. Those who took care of themselves he kept, but the weak ones he suffered to perish." Ay, beloved, but there shall "not a hoof be left behind;" not that poor lingering sheep, not that poor newly-born and feeble lamb; they shall ever one of them be brought in; no, "not a hoof shall be left behind." But saith one, "Perhaps it will be the erring ones among them." Ah, but if the erring ones in the Church be lost then should all be lost, for they all err. "But suppose there be some that specially err?" Well, if these were lost, it would

be to impugn the grace of God, because then it might be said, and said with truth, "It was of works and not of grace," for if it be of grace then must the erring be brought back and forgiven, and even those sheep that break the hedge and leave the pasture, these must be brought in, that it may be said on earth and sung in heaven that it was of grace, free grace, and grace alone, that any were saved--that all were saved--that none are left behind.

Methinks I see the great Shepherd now, and there are all his sheep. They have been wandering. They have got into a dark glen in the mountains and a snow-storm is coming on, and he goes to seek them. There they are. The grim spirit of the tempest, the Prince of the power of the air meets him, and says, "Back, shepherd! What dost thou here?" "I have come to reclaim my own." "They are not thine now," saith he, "they have strayed into my grounds and they are mine, not thine." "Nay, fiend," saith he, "they are mine; they have my blood-mark on them; they were given me of my Divine Father, and I am bound by solemn obligations to keep ever one of hem safely." "Thou shalt not have them," saith the fiend. "I must, I will," saith he. They fought and the good Shepherd he overcame. He dashed down the enemy and trod him underfoot, and crushed him--crushed the serpent. Then the serpent with wily craft replied, "They are thine--thine, I confess, and I will give thee some of hem--the fattest of them." "Nay," saith he, "Nay, fiend, I have bought them all, and I will have them all." And there they come, a goodly company; but he keeps back a few. "They are not all here," says the Shepherd, "and I will have all." "But," saith the fiend, "there are some of them that are speckled sheep, and some that are black and diseased; dost thou want them? Let me have a few at least." "No," saith he, "No; I must have the black ones, the speckled ones, the diseased ones: let them all come. Fiend, stand back, let them come I tell thee,

or my right arm shall fell thee to he ground again." And now they all come but one, and Satan says, "Nay, but this is such a little one; this is so weak. Thou wouldst not have such a shrivelled, scabby one as this in thy bright flock, thou fair Shepherd of God." "Ay," saith he, "but sooner than lose one of hem I will die again, and shed my blood once more to buy it back. Avaunt! All that my Father gave me I will have." And now methinks I see him in the last tremendous day when the sheep pass again under the hand of him that telleth them. He cries, "Of all thou hast given me, I have lost none. They have none of them perished. The lion has not devoured them, nor has the cold destroyed them. I have brought them all safely here, "not a hoof is left behind."

III. The third point was to be this--Jesus Christ will not only have all of a man, and all the men he bought, but he will have ALL THAT EVER BELONGED TO ALL THESE MEN. That is to say, all that Adam lost, Christ will win back; all that we fell from in Adam, Christ will restore us to, and that without the diminution of a single jot or tittle. Not an inch of Paradise shall be given up, nor even a handful of its dust resigned. Christ will have all, or else he will have none--"Not a hoof shall be left behind." Very briefly let me run through a short list of all those precious things which we lost in Adam. And first, with reference to God. Christ's blood-bought own image, in our own likeness," saith God. Alas! that likeness has been defiled and debased. Like the king's superscription on the coinage, which has been worn for many a year, you cannot tell whose image and superscription it now is. Ay, but we shall have that back again. God will re-stamp his precious things; re-engrave his name upon his gems, and we shall wear the likeness of God as Adam did, when he came fresh from his Maker's hand. We have lost, too, as we know to our cost, by nature the divine favour; God loved Adam, he showed that love to him, but when Adam sinned,

though God was merciful, he could not show love to one who had become a rebel; I mean--not the love of complacency--though the love of benevolence never ceased for a moment. Ay, but God delighteth in his people now in Christ. Christ hath gotten back for us the full light of God's favour. The sun shone on Adam full-orbed, and it will not shine on us with less brithness. God loved Adam very tenderly, but he loves us just as much. We have gotten back the two divine privileges of heavenly likeness and heavenly favour. But you will remember, also, Adam had the celestial boon of divine fellowship: "The Lord God walked with Adam in the garden in the cool of the day." And some of you know what it is to have that back again, for he has walked with us, and God has talked to his people till our eyes have shone, and our hearts have been ready to break for very joy. Our poor weak body was not able to contain its overflowing bliss. Christ will get back for his people all the likeness of God, all the favour of God, and all the fellowship with God, of which Satan robbed them. Not a particle less shall they have, but I think I may venture to say even more, for God loved Adam for Adam's sake; he loves you and me for Christ's sake, and that is a better motive; a higher, a deeper, and grander consideration, than even loving a man for his own sake. Because of his only begotten and well beloved Son, he loves all his people with an infinite, unfailing affection. This is the first part of the inheritance which we lost, and which Christ will get us back.

Then again, Adam lost happiness, and we have lost it too, and we have become the heirs of sorrow, and like our Master we are acquainted with grief. Ay, but he will get us back our happiness; we have had some portion of it already. That well of living water, into which Satan cast a great stone so that it could not spring up, Christ has rolled away the stone, and now we drink the water, whereof, if a man drink, he

shall never thirst, and shall never need to go to earthly fountains to draw. Oh! Courage, courage, Christian, in all thy sorrows, Christ will win thee back that glorious happiness which Adam lost for thee. Besides, you all know that in Adam we lost the right to live. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man became a dying soul, and not a living soul any more. But Christ has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, and because he lives, we shall live also.

And yet again, Adam of old was king. Wherever he went there was a dignity about him, that made the lordly lion crouch and lick his feet; the birds of the air did him homage; he bade the fish of the sea leap in their waters, and they did it for he was king--God's crowned cherub who walked in the garden of Eden like a king in his palaces. But now, what are ? The servants of servants; toiling creatures that wipe the sweat from our face, and strain our nerves, and empty out our veins with labour. Ay, but that dignity is restored already to the people of God, for he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus our Lord. And visibly shall that dignity come back to us, when the leopard shall lie down with the kid; when the lion shall eat straw, like the ox, and man on earth shall be lord of the creation just as he was of old. Master of the sea--leviathan, shall do his bidding, and Behemoth shall stay him in his course to hasten to the voice of puny, but redeemed man. We shall have back I believe everything that Adam had, and much more. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

And yet further, not to keep you longer, we believe that in Adam we lost sonship, but in Christ we have received the adoption. In Adam we lost safe standing; but he hath plucked us out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock. In Adam we lost righteousness; but he that

believeth is justified from all things. Whatever Adam lost, Christ has found, and infinitely more.

A man once wrote a book to prove the devil a fool. Certainly, when all matters shall come to their destined consummation, Satan will prove to have been a magnificent fool. Folly, magnified to he highest degree by subtlety, shall be developed in Satan. Ah! thou trailing serpent, what hast thou now after all? I saw thee but a few thousand years ago, twining around the tree of life, and hissing out thy deceptive words. Ah! how glorious was the serpent then--a winged creature, with his azure scales. Ay, and thou didst triumph over God. I heard thee as thou didst go hissing down to thy den, I heard thee say to thy rood,--vipers in the nest as they are,--"My children, I have stained the Almighty's works: I have turned aside his liege subjects; I have injected my poison into the heart of Eve, and Adam hath fallen too; my children let us hold a jubilee, for I have defeated God." Ah! fiend; I think I see thee now, with thy head all broken, and thy jaw-teeth smashed, and thy venom-bags all emptied, and thou thyself a weary length of agony, rolling miles afloat along a sea of fire tortured, destroyed, overcome, tormented, ashamed, hacked, hewed, dashed in pieces, and made a hissing, and a scorn for children to laugh at, and made a scoff throughout eternity. Ah! well, brethren, the great Goliath hath gained nothing by his vauntings: Christ and his people have really lost nothing by Satan. All hey lost once, has been re-taken. The victory has not simply been capture of that which was lost, but a gaining of something more. We are in Christ more than we were before we fell. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

IV. I shall want your patience and your prayers while I now attempt to dwell upon my last illustration. CHRIST WILL HAVE THE WHOLE EARTH--"not a hoof shall be left behind." God hath made this world for himself, and

when he made it he looked around on all his works, and he said, "They were very good." All creation was meant to be a grand orchestra, the angels occupying the higher seats, and sounding the higher notes; while descending in the scale, the inhabitants of the divers worlds, which are perhaps countless in multitude, taking their places in the one harmonious song. In one place there was an old and almost empty spot without a singer; blessed be God, the singers have many of them taken their places already, and there are others on the way. That spot was left for men to sing in, for men who should praise God, and magnify his name always. Ay, but Satan came and took away all the singers, spoiled their voices, and ruined them, and now this world, instead of being an orchestra for God's praise, has become an arena for evil passions, a battle field for lust and rapine, and murder and sin. But mark this, God will not be disappointed of his purpose; this ruined world shall yet sing forth his praises, and without a marring or a jarring voice, the whole of his creatures shall magnify his holy name. Satan is now lord of the most of the world, and he seems to say to-day, "Thou King of kings, take England for thyself, and America be thine, here and there thou shalt take an island, or a city, but let me have the masses of mankind; I will be lord of China's teeming multitudes, and India shall lie within my coils." Brethren, shall it be so? Shall it be so?--are you content in your Master's name to resign those mighty empires to the prince of darkness? Unanimously your hearts speak out your Master's language; it must not, and it shall not be. The tramp of Christian heroes shall yet shake those nations, and the trumpet of Jubilee shall proclaim liberty to the bondaged sons of Adam that are weeping there. They must--they shall belong to Christ. And now the black prince comes forward, and he proposes another thing. "Oh!" saith he, "great King, why this perpetual duel, why must thy servants fight

and live, and my servants continually be defeated? Let us divide the empire." You remember that in the olden times of England, when Canute and the Danes were fighting against the Saxons under Edmund, it was decided at last that the two kings should fight it out. A most agreeable and proper method, I only would that it were always taken in hand, and that all kings who choose to engage in warfare, had to fight their own battles. I am sure we should all be patrons of their encounters, and we should sincerely thank God that there was such a saving of blood; let them fight if they will, but why should their poor subjects die? The fight went on with various success, and at last, the champions having parted, it was decided that one should take one part of England, and the other the other, and so a truce was made. And so, black fiend, thou proposest this to the king of heaven, dost thou?--a division, shall it be; shall the fight be suspended, shall Christ have half, and Satan the other half? No, listen to the cry of that half, which we might give up. "Ye men, ye men of Israel, come hither, help! Help! Come ye to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Why should we be give up to intolerable tyranny, and devoted for ever to hell's monarch and his mighty power"? Nay, we cannot consent, thou fiend! That thou shouldst have one half. Imagine, then, that the gospel has spread in ever country but one, and now Satan pleads, "No missionaries shall be sent there to disturb their unhallowed peacefulness. Let me reign there," saith he, "and I will be content."

But it must not be: Soldiers of Christ, to the battle, to the battle. All the line, all the rampart must be stormed. Not a single castle must be left in the possession of the enemy. We must dash him down from his hills, and rend him up from his valleys. He must not have a single spot whereon to place his foot. Now I hear him flap his broken wings and fly into the grim north. "There are a few Esquimaux," saith he, "who live

in the dreary region long consecrated to my power. I will betake myself to the land of icebergs and of rocks, of the wild bear and of the dog, and there will I keep my last resting place." Brethren, shall it be, shall it be? Shall he reign king of the icebergs and lord even of the frozn north? No, by heaven, and him that redeemed the earth. Out even of that region must he be dashed; as of old he fell from heaven, so must he fall from earth. And now I see the Icelanders bowing before Christ, and the vilest and most depraved of men submitting to Jehovah's sway; but Satan has one dark-souled being; the last man that is left unconverted. Ring your Sabbath bells, my brethren! Go up to your house of prayer! Be happy! But I see a gloom upon your face. What means it? You reply, there is one man left unsaved; Satan has still a lodging-place in the heart of one man, surely our songs would lose their melody if that were the case. Nay, Master, nay, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." Thou shalt walk through this world and meet no more with sin. There shall not be found one inhabitant of this globe who is not thy subject; not a single being who is not fully consecrated to thy will. That were a consummation devoutly to be wished. Equally may I say, it is a consummation confidently to be expected. Wait a little while, labour a little longer, and he that will come shall come and will not tarry; then shall the world see, and hell shall tremble at the sight, that Christ has conquered and has taken back all his possessions. "Not a hoof shall be left behind."

And now, ere you disperse, I have just a word or two of practical doctrine to deliver. Give me your solemn attention; I will not detain you more than one or two minutes. On whose side art thou man, woman? Art thou Christ's, or art thou Satan's? Remember, if thy soul belongs to sin, living and dying as thou art, hell's greedy maw must devour thee; for Satan saith, as Christ saith, "Not a hoof shall be left

behind." The waves of the deluge of wrath, shall drown ever man who is not in the ark. Not a single horn, or tare, shall be left to grow, they must all be bound up in bundles to be burned, and cast into the fire. Answer that question then: Whose art thou? Answer now another. If thou hopest that thou art Christ's, Christ's motto with every man is, "Aut Caesar, aut nullus." He will be Caesar in your hearts, king, emperor, or nothing at all; he will reign entirely over you, or not at all; Christ will not go shares in your heart. Are you wholly Christ's then? "Oh," saith one, "I hope so." Ay, but take care it is not mere hope, but that it is the fact; and lift up thy heart and pray, "Great God sanctify me wholly, spirit, soul and body, take full possession of all my powers, all my members, all my goods, and all my hours, all I am, and all I have, take me, and make me what thou wouldest have me to be." God hear that prayer for thee, and make thee wholly Christ's. Yet, one other question. Is there one who says, "I fear I am not Christ's, but I wish to be?" Is that a sincere wish? I am happy, happy, thrice happy, that thou feelest thus, for thou couldst not even wish to be Christ's, unless Christ's grace had made thee wish. Oh, remember, if thou willest to have Christ, there is no question about Christ's willingness to have thee. Come, just as thou art, and with a full surrender, say:--

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
Oh! Lamb of God, I come."

Trust Christ, and you are saved; rely on Jesus, and your sins are forgiven, and you are Christ's, and shall be Christ's in that day when he maketh up his jewels. May God bless these thoughts and meditations to each and all of us. Amen.

Chapter 23

Christ--Our Substitute

A Sermon

(No. 310)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, April 15th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street, Southwark.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."--2 Corinthians 5:21.

SOMETIME AGO an excellent lady sought an interview with me, with the object as she said, of enlisting my sympathy upon the question of "Anti-Capital Punishment." I heard the excellent reasons she urged against hanging men who had committed murder, and though they did not convince me, I did not seek to answer hem. She proposed that when a man committed murder, he should be confined for life. My remark was, that a great many men who had been confined half their lives were not a bit the better for it, and as for her belief that they would necessarily be brought to repentance, I was afraid it was but a dream. "Ah," she said, good soul as she was, "that is because we have been all wrong about punishments. We punish people because we think they deserve to be punished. Now, we ought to show them," said she, "that we love them; that we only punish them to make them better." "Indeed, madam," I said, "I have heard that theory a great many times, and I have seen much fine writing upon the matter, but I am no believer in it. The design of punishment should be amendment, but the ground of punishment lies in the positive guilt of the offender. I believe that when a man does wrong, he ought to be punished for it, and that there is a guilt in sin which justly merits punishment." "Oh no; she could not see that. Sin

was a very wrong thing, but punishment was not a proper idea. She thought that people were treated too cruelly in prison, and that they ought to be taught that we love them. If they were treated kindly in prison, and tenderly dealt with, they would grow so much better, she was sure." With a view of interpreting her own theory, I said, "I suppose, then, you would give criminals all sorts of indulgences in prison. Some great vagabond who has committed burglary dozens of times--I suppose you would let him sit in an easy chair in the evening before a nice fire, and mix him a glass of spirits and water, and give him his pope, and make him happy, to show him how much we love him." "Well, no, she would not give him the spirits, but, still, all the rest would do him good." I thought that was a delightful picture certainly. It seemed to me to be the most prolific method of cultivating rogues which ingenuity could invent. I imagine that you could row any number of thieves in that way; for it would be a special means of propagating all manner of roguery and wickedness. These very delightful theories to such a simple mind as mine, were the source of much amusement, the idea of fondling villains, and treating heir crimes as if they were the tumbles and falls of children, made me laugh heartily. I fancied I saw the government resigning its functions to these excellent persons, and the grand results of their marvellously kind experiments. The sword of the magistrate transformed into a gruel-spoon, and the jail become a sweet retreat for injured reputations.

Little however, did I think I should live to see this kind of stuff taught in pulpits; I had no idea that there would come out a divinity, which would bring down God's moral government from he solemn aspect in which Scripture reveals it, to a namby-pamby sentimentalism, which adores a Deity destitute of every masculline virtue. But we never know to-day what may occur to-morrow. We have lived to see a certain sort of

men--thank God they are not Baptists--though I am sorry to say there are a great many Baptists who are beginning to follow in their trail--who seek to teach now-a-days, that God is a universal Father, and that our ideas of his dealing with the impenitent as a Judge, and not as a Father, are remnants of antiquated error. Sin, according to these men, is a disorder rather than an offence, an error rather than a crime. Love is the only attribute they can discern, and the full-orbed Deity they have not known. Some of these men push their way very far into the bogs and mire of falsehood, until they inform us that eternal punishment is ridiculed as a dream. In fact, books now appear, which teach us that there is no such thing as the Vicarious Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. They use the word Atonement it is true, but in regard to its meaning, they have removed the ancient landmark. They acknowledge that the Father has shown his great love to poor sinful man by sending his Son, but not that God was inflexibly just in the exhibition of his mercy, not that he punished Christ on the behalf of his people, nor that indeed God ever will punish anybody I his wrath, or that there is such a thing as justice apart from discipline. Even sin and hell are but old words employed henceforth in a new and altered sense. Those are old-fashioned notions, and we poor souls who go on talking about election and imputed righteousness, are behind our time. Ay, and the gentlemen who bring out books on this subject, applaud Mr. Maurice, and Professor Scott, and the like, but are too cowardly to follow them, and boldly propound these sentiments. These are the new men whom God has sent down from heaven, to tell us that the apostle Paul was all wrong, that our faith is vain, that we have been quite mistaken, that there was no need for propitiating blood to wash away our sins; that the fact was, our sins needed discipline, but penal vengeance and righteous wrath are quite out of the question. When I

thus speak, I am free to confess that such ideas are not boldly taught by a certain individual whose volume excites these remarks, but as he puffs the books of gross perverters of the truth, I am compelled to believe that he endorses such theology.

Well, brethren, I am happy to say that sort of stuff has not gained entrance into this pulpit. I dare say the worms will eat the wood before there will be anything of that sort sounded in his place; and may these bones be picked by vultures, and this flesh be rent in sunder by lions, and may every nerve in this body suffer pangs and tortures, ere these lips shall give utterance to any such doctrines or sentiments. We are content to remain among the vulgar souls who believe the old doctrines of grace. We are wolling still to be behind in the great march of intellect, and stand by that unmoving cross, which, like the pole star, never advances, because it never stirs, but always abides in its place, the guide of the soul to heaven, the one foundation other than which no man can lay, and without building upon which, no man shall ever see the face of God and live.

Thus much have I said upon a matter which just now is exciting controversy. It has been my high privilege to be associated with six of our ablest brethren in the ministry, in a letter of protest against the countenance which a certain newspaper seemed willing to lend to this modern heresy. We trust it may be the means, in the hands of God, of helping to check that downward march--that wandering from truth which seems by some singular infatuation, to have unsettled the minds of some brethren in our denomination. Now I come to address you upon the opic which is most continually assailed by those who preach another gospel "which is not another--but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ," namely, the doctrine of the substitution of Christ on our behalf, his actual atonement for our sins, and our

positive and actual justification through his sufferings and righteousness. It seems to me that until language can mean the very reverse of what it says, until by some strange logic, God's Word can be contradicted and can be made to belief itself, the doctrine of substitution can never be rooted out of the words which I have selected for my text "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

First, then, the sinlessness of the substitute; secondly, the reality of the imputation of sin to him; and thirdly, the glorious reality of the imputation of righteousness to us.

I. First, THE SINLESSNESS OF THE SUBSTITUTE.

The doctrine of Holy Scripture is this, that inasmuch as man could not keep God's law, having fallen in Adam, Christ came and fulfilled the law on the behalf of his people; and that inasmuch as man had already broken the divine law and incurred the penalty of the wrath of God, Christ came and suffered in the room, place, and stead of his elect ones, that so by his enduring the full vials of wrath, they might be emptied out and not a drop might ever fall upon the heads of his blood-bought people. Now, you will readily perceive that if one is to be a substitute for another before God, either to work out a righteousness or to suffer a penalty, that substitute must himself be free from sin. If he hath sin of his own, all that he can suffer will but be the due reward of his own iniquity. If he hath himself transgressed, he cannot suffer for another, because all his sufferings are already due on his own personal account. On the other and, it is quite clear that none but a perfect man could ever work out a spotless righteousness for us, and keep the law in our stead, for if he hath dishonoured the commandment in his thought, there must be a corresponding flaw in his service. If the warp and woof be speckled,

how shall he bring forth the robe of milk-white purity, and wrap it about our loins? He must be a spotless one who shall become the representative of his people, either to give them a passive or active righteousness, either to offer a satisfaction as the penalty of their sins, or a righteousness as the fulfilment of God's demand.

It is satisfactory for us to know, and to believe beyond a doubt, that our Lord Jesus was without sin. Of course, in his divine nature he could not know iniquity; and as for his human nature, it never knew the original taint of depravity. He was of the seed of the woman, but not of the tainted and infected see of Adam. Overshadowed as was the virgin by the Holy Ghost, no corruption entered into his nativity. That holy thing which was born of her was neither conceived in sin nor shapen in iniquity. He was brought into this world immaculate. He was immaculately conceived and immaculately born. In him that natural black blood which we have inherited from Adam never dwelt. His heart was upright within him; his soul was without any bias to evil; his imagination had never been darkened. He had no infatuated mind. There was no tendency whatever in him that to do that which was good, holy, and honourable. And as he did not share in the original depravity, so he did not share in the imputed sin of Adam which we have inherited--not, I mean, in himself personally, though he took the consequences of that, as he stood as our representative. The sin of Adam had never passed over the head of the second Adam. All that were in the loins of Adam sinned in him when he touched the fruit; but Jesus was not in the loins of Adam. Though he might be conceived of as being in the womb of the woman--"a new thing which the Lord created in the earth,"--he lay not in Adam when he sinned, and consequently no guilt from Adam, either of depravity of nature, or of distance from God, ever fell upon Jesus as the result of anything that Adam did. I mean upon

Jesus as considered in himself though he certainly took the sin of Adam as he was the representative of his people.

Again, as in his nature he was free from the corruption and condemnation of the sin of Adam, so also in his life, no sin ever corrupted his way. His eye never flashed with unhallowed anger; his lip never uttered a treacherous or deceitful word; his heat never harboured an evil imagination. Never did he wander after lust; no covetousness ever so much as glanced into his soul. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." From the beginning of his life to the end, you cannot put your finger even upon a mistake, much less upon a wilful error. So perfect was he, that no virtue seems to preponderate, or by an opposing quality give a bias to the scale of absolute rectitude. John is distinguished for his love, Peter for his courage; but Jesus Christ is distinguished for neither one above the another, because he possesses all in such sublime unison, such heavenly harmony, that no one virtue stands out above the rest. He is meek, but he is courageous. He is loving, but he is decided; he is bold as a lion, yet he is quiet and peaceful as a lamb. He was like that fine flour which was offered before God in the burnt offering; a flour without grit, so smooth, that when you rubbed it, it was soft and pure, no particles could be discerned: so was his character fully ground, fully compounded. There was not one feature in his moral countenance which had undue preponderance above the other; but he was replete in everything that was virtuous and good. Tempted he was, it is true, but sinned he never. The whirlwind came from he wilderness, and smote upon the four corners of that house, but it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. The rains descended, heaven afflicted him; the winds blew, the mysterious agency of hell assailed him; the floods came, all earth was in arms against him, but yet he stood firm in the midst of all.

Never once did he even seem to bend before the tempest; but buffetting the fury of the blast, bearing all the temptations that could ever happen to man, which summed themselves up and consummated their fury on him, he stood to the end, without a single flaw in his life, or a stain upon his spotless robe. Let us rejoice, then, in this, my beloved brothers and sisters, that we have such a substitute--one who is fit and proper to stand in our place, and to suffer in our stead, seeing he has no need to offer a sacrifice for himself; no need to cry for himself, "Father, I have sinned;" no need to bend the knee of the penitent and confess his own iniquities, for he is without spot or blemish, the perfect lamb of God's passover.

I would have you carefully notice the particular expression of the text, for it struck me as being very beautiful and significant,--"who knew no sin." It does not merely say did none, but knew none. Sin was no acquaintance of his; he was acquainted with grief, but no acquaintance of sin. He had to walk in the midst of its most frequented haunts, but did not know it; not that he was ignorant of its nature, or did not know its penalty, but he did not know it; he was a stranger to it, he never gave it the wink or nod of familiar recognition. Of course he knew what sin was, for he was ver God, but with the sin he had no communion, no fellowship, no brotherhood. He was a perfect stranger in the presence of sin; he was a foreigner; he was not an inhabitant of that land where sin is acknowledge. He passed through the wilderness of suffering, but into the wilderness of sin he could never go. "He knew no sin;" mark that expression and treasure it up, and when you are thinking of your substitute, and see him hang bleeding upon the cross, think that you see written in those lines of blood written along his blessed body, "He knew no sin." Mingled with the redness of his blood--that Rose of Sharon; behold the purity of his nature, the Lily

of the Valley--"He knew no sin."

II. Let us pass on to notice the second and most important point; THE ACTUAL SUBSTITUTION OF CHRIST, AND THE REAL IMPUTATION OF SIN TO HIM. "He made him to be sin for us."

Here be careful to observe who transferred the sin. God the Father laid on Jesus the iniquities of us all. Man could not make Christ sin. Man could not transfer his guilt to another. It is not for us to say whether Christ could or could not have made himself sin for us; that certain it is, he did not take this priesthood upon himself, but he was called of God, as was Aaron. The Redeemer's vicarious position is warranted, nay ordained by divine authority. "He hath made him to be sin for us." I must now beg you to notice how very explicit the term is. Some of our expositors will have it that the word here used must mean "sin-offering." "He made him to be a sin-offering for us." I thought it well to look to my Greek Testament to see whether it could be so. Of course we all know that the word here translated "sin," is very often translated "sin-offering," but it is always useful, when you have a disputed passage, to look it through, and see whether in this case the word would bear such a meaning. These commentators say it means a sin-offering,--well, I will read it: "He hath made him to be a sin-offering for us who knew no sin-offering." Does not that strike you as being ridiculous? But they are precisely the same words; and if it be fair to translate it "sin-offering" in one place, it must, in all reason, be fair to translate it so in the other. The fact it, while in some passages it may be rendered "sin-offering," in this passage it cannot be so, because it would be to run counter to all honesty to translate the same word in the same sentence two different ways. No; we must take hem as they stand. "He hath made him to be sin for us," not merely an offering, but sin for us.

My predecessor, Dr. Gill, edited the works of Tobias Crisp, but Tobias Crisp went further than Dr. Gill or any of us can approve; for in one place Crisp calls Christ a sinner, though he does not mean that he ever sinned himself. He actually calls Christ a transgressor, and justifies himself by that passage, "He was numbered with the transgressors." Martin Luther is reputed to have broadly said that, although Jesus Christ was sinless, yet he was the greatest sinner that ever lived, because all the sins of his people lay upon him. Now, such expressions I think to be unguarded, if not profane. Certainly Christian men should take care that they use not language which, by the ignorant and uninstructed, may be translated to mean what they never intended to teach. The fact is, brethren, that in no sense whatever--take that as I say it--in no sense whatever can Jesus Christ ever be conceived of as having been guilty. He knew no sin." Not only was he not guilty of any sin which he committed himself, but he was not guilty of our sins. No guilt can possibly attach to a man who has not been guilty. He must have had complicity in the deed itself, or else no guilt can possibly be laid on him. Jesus Christ stands in the midst of all the divine thunders, and suffers all the punishment, but not a drop of sin ever stained him. In no sense is he ever a guilty man, but always is he an accepted and a holy one. What, then, is the meaning of that very forcible expression f my text? We must interpret Scriptural modes of expression by the verbage of the speakers. We know that our Master once said himself, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood;" he did not mean that the cup was the covenant. He said, "Take, eat, this is my body"--no one of us conceives that the bread is the literal flesh and blood of Christ. We take that bread as if it were the body, and it actually represents it. Now, we are to read a passage like this, according to the analogy of faith. Jesus Christ was made by his Father

sin for us, that is, he was treated as if he had himself been sin. He was not sin; he was not sinful; he was not guilty; but, he was treated by his Father, as if he had not only been sinful, but as if he had been sin itself. That is a strong expression used here. Not only hath he made him to be the substitute for sin, but to be sin. God looked on Christ as if Christ had been sin; not as if he had taken up the sins of his people, or as if they were laid on him, though that were true, but as if he himself had positively been that noxious--that God-hating--that soul-damning thing, called sin. When the Judge of all the earth said, "Where is Sin?" Christ presented himself. He stood before his Father as if he had been the accumulation of all human guilt; as if he himself were that thing which God cannot endure, but which he must drive from his presence for ever. And now see how this making of Jesus to be sin was enacted to the fullest extent. The righteous Lord looked on Christ as being sin, and therefore Christ must be taken without the camp. Sin cannot be borne in God's Zion, cannot be allowed to dwell in God's Jerusalem; it must be taken without the camp, it is a leprous thing, put it away. Cast out from fellowship, from love, from pity, sin must ever be. Take him away, take him away, ye crowd! Hurry him through the streets and bear him to Calvary. Take him without the camp--as was the beast which was offered for sin without the camp, so must Christ be, who was made sin for us. And now, God looks on him as being sin, and sin must bear punishment. Christ is punished. The most fearful of deaths is exacted at his hand, and God has no pity for him. How should he have pity on sin? God hates it. No tongue can tell, no soul can divine the terrible hatred of God to that which is evil, and he treats Christ as if he were sin. He prays, but heaven shuts out his prayer; he cries for water, but heaven and earth refuse to wet his lips except with vinegar. He turns his eye to heaven,

he sees nothing there. How should he? God cannot look on sin, and sin can have no claim on God: "My God, my God," he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me?" O solemn necessity, how could God do anything with sin but forsake it? How could iniquity have fellowship with God? Shall divine smiles rest on sin? Nay, nay, it must not be. Therefore is it that he who is made sin must bemoan desertion and terror. God cannot touch him, cannot dwell with him, cannot come near him. He is abhorred, cast away; it hath pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. At last he dies. God will not keep him in life--how should he? Is it not the meetest thing in the world that sin should be buried? "Bury it out of my sight, hide this corruption," and lo! Jesus, as if he were sin, is put away out of the sight of God and man as a thing obnoxious. I do not know whether I have clearly uttered what I want to state, but what a rim picture that is, to conceive of sin gathered up into one mass--murder, lust and rapine, and adultery, and all manner of crime, all piled together in one hideous heap. We ourselves, brethren, impure though we be, could not bear this; how much less should God with his pure and holy eyes bear with that mass of sin, and yet there it is, and God looked upon Christ as if he were that mass of sin. He was not sin, but he looked upon him as made sin for us. He stands in our place, assumes our guilt, takes on him our iniquity, and God treats him as if he had been sin. Now, my dear brothers and sisters, let us just lift up our hearts with gratitude for a few moments. Here we are to-night; we know that we are guilty, but our sins have all been punished years ago. Before my soul believed in Christ, the punishment of my sin had all been endured. We are not to think that Christ's blood derives its efficacy from our faith. Fact precedes faith. Christ hath redeemed us; faith discovers his; but it was a fact of that finished sacrifice.

Though still defiled by sin, yet who can lay anything to he charge of

the man whose guilt is gone, lifted bodily from off him, and put upon Christ? How can any punishment fall on that man who ceases to possess sins, because his sin has eighteen hundred years ago been cast upon Christ, and Christ has suffered in his place and stead? Oh, glorious triumph of faith to be able to say, whenever I feel the guilt of sin, whenever conscience pricks me, "Yes, it is true, but my Lord is answerable for it all, for he has taken it all upon himself, and suffered in my room, and place, and stead." How precious when I see my debts, to be able to say, "Yes, but the blood of Christ, God's dear Son, hath cleansed me from all sin!" How precious, not only to see my sin dying when I believe, but to know that it was dead, it was gone, it ceased to e, eighteen hundred years ago. All the sins that you and I have ever committed, or ever shall commit, if we be heirs of mercy, and children of God, are all dead things.

"Our Jesus nailed them to his cross,
And sung the triumph when he rose."

These cannot rise in judgment to condemn us; they have all been slain, shrouded, buried; they are removed from us as far as the east is from the west, because "He hath made him to be sinf or us who knew no sin."

III. You see then the reality of the imputation of sin to Christ from the amazing doctrine that Christ is made sin for us. But now notice the concluding thought, upon which I must dwell a moment, but it must be ver briefly, for two reasons, my time has gone, and my strength has gone too. "THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM." Now, here I beg you to notice, that it does not simply say that we might be made righteous, but "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" as if righteousness, that lovely, glorious, God-honouring, God-delighting thing--as if we were actually made that. God looks on his people as being abstract righteousness, not nly righteous, but

righteousness. To be righteous, is as if a man should have a box covered with gold, the box would then be golden; but to be righteousness is to have a box of solid gold. To be a righteous man is to have righteousness cast over me; but to be made righteousness, that is to be made solid essential righteousness in the sight of God. Well now, this is a glorious fact and a most wonderful privilege, that we poor sinners are made "the righteousness of God in him." God sees no sin in any one of his people, no iniquity in Jacob, when he looks upon them in Christ. In themselves he sees nothing but filth and abomination, in Christ nothing but purity and righteousness. Is it not, and must it not ever be to the Christian, one of his most delightful privileges to know that altogether apart from anything that we have ever done, or can do, God looks upon his people as being righteous, nay, as being righteousness, and that despite all of the sins they have ever committed, they are accepted in him as if they had been Christ, while Christ was punished for hem as if he had been sin. Why, when I stand in my own place, I am lost and ruined; my place is the place where Judas stood, the place where the devil lies in everlasting shame. But when I stand in Christ's place--and I fail to stand where faith has put me till I stand there--when I stand in Christ's place, the Father's everlastingly beloved one, the Father's accepted one, him whom the Father delighteth to honour--when I stand there, I stand where faith hath a right to put me, and I am in the most joyous spot that a creature of God can occupy. Oh, Christian, get thee up, get thee up into the high mountain, and stand where thy Saviour stands, for that is thy place. Lie not there on the dunghill of fallen humanity, that is not thy place now; Christ has once taken it on thy behoof. "He made him to be sin for us." Thy place is yonder there, above the starry hosts, where he hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in

heavenly places in him. Not there, at the day of judgment, where the wicked shriek for shelter, and beg for the hills to cover hem, but there, where Jesus sits upon his throne--there is thy place, my soul. He will make thee to sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and has sat down with his Father upon his throne. Oh! That I could mount to the heights of this argument to-night; it needs a seraphic preacher to picture the saint in Christ, robed in Christ's righteousness, wearing Christ's nature, bearing Christ's palm of victory, sitting on Christ's throne, wearing Christ's crown. And yet this is our privilege! He wore my crown, the crown of thorns; I wear his crown, the crown of glory. He wore my dress, nay, rather, he wore my nakedness when he died upon the cross; I wear his robes, the royal robes of the King of kings. He bore my shame; I bear his honour. He endured my sufferings to this end that my joy may be full, and that his joy may be fulfilled in me. He laid in the grave that I might rise from the dead and that I may dwell in him, and all this he comes again to give me, to make it sure to me and to all hat love his appearing, to show that all his people shall enter into their inheritance.

Now, my brothers and sisters, Mr. Maurice, McLeod, Campbell, and their great admirer, Mr. Brown, may go on with their preaching as long as they like, but they will never make a convert of a man who knows what the vitality of religion is; for he who knows what substitution means, he who knows what it is to stand where Christ stands, will never care to occupy the ground on which Mr. Maurice stands. He who has ever been made to sit together with Christ, and once to enjoy the real preciousness of a transfer of Christ's righteousness to him and his sin to Christ, that man has eaten the bread of heaven, and will never renounce it for husks. No, my brethren, we could lay down our lives for this truth rather than give it up. No, we cannot by any means turn

aside from this glorious stability of faith, and for this good reason, that there is nothing for us in the doctrine which these men teach. It may suit intellectual gentlefolk, I dare say it does; but it will not suit us. We are poor sinners and nothing at all, and if Christ is not our all in all, there is nothing for us. I have often thought the best answer for all these new ideas is, that the true gospel was always preached to the poor;--"The poor have the gospel preached to hem."--I am sure that the poor will never learn the gospel of these new divines, for they cannot make head or tail of it, nor the rich either; for after you have read through one of their volumes, you have not the least idea of what the book is about, until you have read it through eight or nine times, and then you begin to think you are a very stupid being for ever having read such inflated heresy, for it sours your temper and makes you feel angry, to see the precious truths of God trodden under foot. Some of us must stand out against these attacks on truth, although we love not controversy. We rejoice in the liberty of our fellow-men, and would have them proclaim their convictions; but if they touch these precious things, they touch the apple of our eye. We can allow a thousand opinions in the world, but that which infringes upon the precious doctrine of a covenant salvation, through the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ,--against that we must, and will, enter our hearty and solemn protest, as long as God spares us. Take away once from us those glorious doctrines, and where are we brethren? We may lay us down and die, for nothing remains that is worth living for. We have come to the valley of the shadow of death, when we find these doctrines to e untrue. If these things which I speak to you to-night be not the verities of Christ; if they be not true, there is no comfort left for any poor man under God's sky, and it were better for us never to have been born. I may say what Jonathan Edwards says at

the end of his book, "If any man could disprove the doctrines of the gospel, he should then sit down and weep to think they were not true, for," says he, "it would be the most dreadful calamity that could happen to the world, to have a glimpse of such truths, and then for them to melt away in the thin air of fiction, as having no substantiality in them." Stand up for the truth of Christ; I would not have you be bigotted, but I would have you be decided. Do not give countenance to any of this trash and error, which is going abroad, but stand firm. Be not turned away from your stedfastness by any pretence of intellectuality and high philosophy, but earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to he saints, and hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard of us, and have been taught, even as ye have read in this sacred Book, which is the way of everlasting life.

Thus then, beloved, without gathering up my strength for the fray, or attempting to analyse the subtleties of those who would pervert the simple gospel, I speak out my mind and utter the kindlings of my heart among you. Little enough will ye reck, over whom the Holy Ghost hath given me the oversight, what the grievous wolves may design, if ye keep within the fold. Break not the sacred bounds wherein God hath enclosed his Church. He hath encircled us in the arms of covenant love. He hath united us in indissoluble bonds to the Lord Jesus. He hath fortified us with the assurance that the Holy Spirit shall guide us into all truth.

God grant that those beyond the pale of visible fellowship with us in this eternal gospel may see their danger and escape from he fowler's snare!

Chapter 24

The Beginning, Increase, and End of the Divine Life

A Sermon

(No. 311)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 29th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase."--Job 8:7.

THIS WAS the reasoning of Bildad the Shuhite. He wished to prove that Job could not possibly be an upright man, for if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually, or that if he fell into any trouble, God would awake for him, and make the habitation of his righteousness prosperous; and though his family were now all destroyed, and his wealth scattered to the winds, yet if he were an upright man, God would surely appear for him, and his latter end would greatly increase.

Now, the utterances of Bildad, and of the other two men who came to comfort Job, but who made his wounds tingle, are not to be accepted as being inspired. They spake as men--as mere men. They reasoned no doubt in their own esteem logically enough; but the Spirit of God was not with hem in their speech, therefore with regard to any sentiment which we find uttered by these men, we must use our own judgment; and if it be not in consonance with the rest of Holy Scriptures, it will be our bounden duty to reject it as being but the word of man--of a wise and ancient man it is true, but still of a man only.

With regard to the passage which I have selected as a text, it is rue--altogether apart from its being said by Bildad, or being found in

the Bible at all; it is true, as indeed the facts of the book of Job prove: for Job did greatly increase in his latter end. His beginning was small: he was brought down to poverty, to the potsherd and to the dunghill; he had many graves, but no children; he had had many losses, he had now nothing left to lose; and yet God did awake for him; his righteousness came out from he darkness which had eclipsed it; he shone in sevenfold prosperity; s that the words of Bildad were prophetic, though he knew it not; God put into his mouth language which did come true, after all. Indeed, we have here a great principle--a principle against which none can ever contend. The beginning of the godly and the upright man may be but very small, but his latter end shall greatly increase.

Evil things may seem to begin well, but they end badly; there is the flash and the glare, but afterwards the darkness and the black ash. They promise fairly: their sun rises in the zenith, and then speedily sets, never to rise again. Evil things begin as mountains; they end as mole-hills. You sail upon their ocean at first, and as you sail onward it shrinks into a river, and afterwards into a dry bed, if not into burning sands. Behold Satan in the garden of Eden. Sin begins with the promise, "Ye shall be as gods!" How grand is its beginning! Where ends it? Shivering beneath the trees of the garden, complaining of nakedness, sin comes to its end. Or see it in Satan himself. He stretches out his right hand to snatch the diadem of heaven; he would be Lord paramount. He cannot bear to serve, he longs to reign. Oh! Glittering vision, that enchants the eye of an arch-angelic spirit! But where ends it? The vision is all gone, and is succeeded by "the blackness of darkness for ever;" and the chains reserved in fire for those that kept not their first estate. So will it be with you, too, my friend, if you have chosen the path of evil. To-day your mirth is as

the crackling of thorns under a pot; it blazes, it crackles with excess of joy; to-morrow thou shalt find nothing there but a handful of ashes, and darkness, and cold. Ay, the path of evil is down hill, from its sunny summits, to its dark ravines--from the loftiness, which it assumes when it professes to be a cherub, to that lowliness in which it finds itself to be a fiend. Evil goeth downward; it hath its great things first, and then its terrible things last. No so, however, with good. With good the beginning is even small; but its latter end doth greatly increase. "The path of the just is as the shining light," which sheds a few flickering rays at first, which exercises a combat with the darkness, but it "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." As the coming forth of stars at even-tide, when first one, and then another, and yet another struggles through the darkness, till at last the whole starry host are marshalled on the heavenly plains--so it is with good--it beginneth with grains of sand, it goeth on to hills, and anon it swelleth up to mountains; it beginneth with the rippling rill--the little cascade that leapeth from its secret birth-place, and down the mountain it dasheth, it swelleth to a joyous stream, wherein the fish do leap; anon it becomes a river, which bears upon the surface the navigation of nations, and then it rolls at last an ocean that belts the globe. Good things progress. They are like Jacob's ladder--they ascend round by round. We begin as men, we end as angels; we climb until the promise of Satan is fulfilled in a sense in which he never understood it; we become as gods, and are made partakers of the Divine, being reconciled unto God, and then having God's grace infused into us. The principle, then, upon which I have to speak this morning, is this,--that though the beginnings of good things are small, yet their latter end shall greatly increase. Instead, however, of dealing with this as a mere doctrine, I propose to use it practically; assume the

fact, and then make a practical use of it. Three ends shall I hope to serve--first, to quiet the fears of those who are but beginners in grace; secondly, to confirm their faith; and, thirdly, to quicken their diligence. May I ask the prayers of God's people here that I may be strengthened in this preaching? I cannot tell how it is,--the cold clammy sweat comes over me now I am about to address you, and I feel almost quivering with weakness; nevertheless, this is a subject which may strengthen me as well as you, and therefore let us go to it at once.

I. First, then, for THE QUIETING OF YOUR FEARS. Thou sayest, my hearer, "I am but a beginner in grace, and therefore I am vexed with anxiety, and full of timorousness." Yes, and it shall be my business if God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, shall enable me, to give thee some few sweet words which, like wafers made with honey, thou mayest roll under thy tongue, and find them satisfactory and pleasant, even as that manna which came down from heaven, and fed the Israelites in the wilderness. Perhaps thy first fear, if I put it into words, is this:--"My beginning is so small that I cannot tell when it did begin, and therefore, methinks I cannot have been converted, but am still in the gall of bitterness." O beloved! How many thousands like thyself have been exercised with doubts upon this point! They were not converted in an instant; they were not stricken down as in the Revivals; they were not nerved with terrible alarms, such as John Bunyan describeth in his "Grace Abounding;" but they were called of God, as was Lydia, by a still small voice. Their hearts were gradually and happily opened to receive the truth; it was not as if a tornado or a hurricane rushed through their spirits; but a soft zephr below, and they lived and came to God. And you doubt, do you, because from this very reason you cannot tell when you were generated; it is but necessary for you to know that

you are so. If thou canst set no date to the beginning of thy faith, yet if thou dost believe now, thou art saved. If in thy diary there stands no red-letter day in which thy sins were pardoned, and thy soul accepted, yet if thy trust be in Jesus only, this very day thou art pardoned, and thou art accepted, despite thy ignorance of the time when. God's promises bear no date; our notes are dated because there is a time when they run due, and we are apt to forget them; God's promises bear none, and his gifts sometimes do not bear any. If thou art saved--though the date be erased--yet do thou rejoice and triumph evermore in the Lord thy God. True, there are some of us who can remember the precise spot where we first found the Saviour. The day will never be forgotten when these eyes looked to he cross of Christ and found their tears all wiped away. But thousands in the fold of Jesus know not when hey were brought in; be it enough for hem to know they are there. Let them feed upon the pasture, let them lie down beside the still waters for whether they came by night or by day they did not come at a forbidden hour. Whether they came in youth or in old age, it matters not; all times are acceptable with God, "and whosoever cometh," come he when he may, "he will in no wise cast out."

Does it not strike you as being very foolish reasoning if you should say in your heart, "I am not converted because I do not know when?" Nay, with such reasoning as that, I could prove that old Rome was never built, because the precise date of her building is unknown; nay, we might declare that the world was never made, for its exact age even the geologist cannot tell us. We might prove that Jesus Christ himself never died, for the precise date on which he expired on the tree is lost beyond recovery; nor doth it signify much to us. We know the world was made, we know that Christ did die, and so you--if you are onw reconciled to God, if now your trembling arms are cast around that

cross, you too are saved--though the beginning was so small that you cannot tell when it was. Indeed, in living things, it is hard to put the finger upon the beginning. Here is a fruit-will you tell me when it began to be? Was it at the time when first the tree sent forth its fruit-bud? Did this fruit begin when first the flower shed its exhalations of perfume upon the air? Indeed, you could not have seen it if you had looked. When was it? Was it when the full-ripe flower was blown away, and its leaves were scattered to the wind, and a little embryo of fruit was left? Twere hard to say it did not begin before that, and equally hard to say at what precise instant that fruit began to be formed. Ay, and so is it with divine grace; the desires are so faint at the beginning, the convictions are but the etchings upon the plate, which afterwards must be engraven with a harder instrument; and they are such flimsy things, such transient impressions of divine truth, that twere difficult to say what is transient and what permanent, what is really of the Spirit of God, and what is not; what hath saved the soul, or what only brought it to the verge of salvation; what made it really live, or what was really the calling together of the dry bones before the breath came, and the bones began to live. Quite your fears, my hearers, upon this point, for if ye are saved, no matter when, ye never shall be unsaved.

Another doubt also arises from this point. "Ah! sir," saith a timid Christian, "it is not merely the absence of all date to my conversion, but the extreme weakness of the grace I have." "Ah," saith one, "I sometimes think I have a little faith, but it is so mingled with unbelief, distrust, and incredulity, that I can hardly think it is God's gift, the faith of God's elect. I hope sometimes I have a little love, but it is such a beginning, such a mere spark, that I cannot think it is the love which God the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul;

my beginning is so exceeding small, that I have to look, and look, and look again, at times, before I can discern it for myself. If I have faith, it is but as a rain of mustard seed, and I fear it will never be that goodly tree, in the midst of whose branches the birds of the air might rest." Courage, my brother, courage; however small the beginnings of grace, hey are such beginnings that they shall have a glorious end. When God begins to build, if he lay but one single stone he will finish the structure; when Christ sits down to weave, though he casts the shuttle but once, and that time the thread was so filmy as scarcely to be discernable, he will nevertheless continue ill the piece is finished, and the whole is wrought. If thy faith be never so little, yet it is immortal, and that immortality may well compensate for its littleness. A spark of grace is a spark of Deity--as soon may Deity be quenched as to quench grace--that grace within thy soul given thee of the Spirit shall continue to burn, and he who gave it shall fan it with his own soft breath, for "he will not quench the smoking flax;" he will bring it to a fire, and afterwards to a furnace, till thy faith shall attain to the full assurance of understanding. Oh! Let not the littleness of God's beginnings stagger you. Who would think, if he stood at the source of the Thames, that it would ever be such a river as it is--making this city rich? So little is it that a child might stop it with his hand, and but a handful of miry clay might dam its course, but there it rolls a mighty river that man cannot stop. And so shall it be with thee; thy faith is so little that it seems not to exist at all, and thy love so faint that it can scarcely be called love, but thy latter end shall greatly increase, till thou shalt become strong and do exploits; the babe shall become a giant; and he that stumbled at every straw shall move mountains, and make the very hills to shake.

Having thus spoken upon two fears, which are the result of these small beginnings, let me now try to quiet another. "Ah!" saith the heir of heaven, "I do hope that in me grace hath commenced its work, but my fear is, that such frail faith as mine will never stand the test of years. I am," saith he, "so weak, that one temptation would be too much for me; how then can I hope to pass through yonder forest of spears held in the hands of valiant enemies? A drop makes me tremble, how shall I stem the roaring flood of life and death? Let but one arrow fly from hell it penetrates my tender flesh; what hen if Satan shall empty his quiver? I shall surely fall by the hand of the enemy. My beginnings are so small that I am certain they will soon come to their end, and that end must be black despair." Be of good courage, brother, have done with that fear one for all; it is rue, as thou sayest, the temptation will be too much for thee, but what hast thou to do with it? Heaven is not to be won by thy might, but by the might of him who has promised heaven to thee; thy crown of life is to be obtained, not by thy arm, but by that arm which now holds it out, and bids thee run towards it. If thy perseverance rested upon thyself thou couldst not persevere an hour; if spiritual life depended on itself it would be like the shooting-star, which makes a shining trail for a moment and then is gone; but thanks be unto God, it is written--"Because I live, ye shall live also." "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

"The feeblest saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way,"

because that feeble sain is girded with Jehovah's strength. If I had to fight in another man's strength, and I knew that he had gigantic force, I should not estimate the power of my own limits and muscles, but of his limbs and muscles; and so if I have to fight in the strength of God, I am not to reckon by what I can do, but what he can do; not what

I am able, but what he is able to accomplish. I am not to go forth bound and limited, and cramped, and bandaged by my own infirmity, but make free, and valorous, and unconquerable through that Divine omnipotence, which first spake all things into existence, and now maintaineth all things by the word of his power. Stand up, poor brother, full of fears though you be, and for once glory in your infirmities, and boast in your Master. I say it in thy behalf, and on my own--ye principalities and powers of darkness, ye leaguered hosts of hell, ye enemies in human form, or in form demoniac, I challenge ye all; more than a match for ever one of you am I if God be with me; less than nothing were I, if left alone; but were I weaker than I am I would defy you all, for God is my strength; Jehovah is become my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation, therefore will we tread down our enemies, and Moab shall become as straw that is trodden down for the dunghill; in God will be rejoice, yea in God will we greatly rejoice, and in him will we rejoice all the day.

Thus have I dealth with a third fear. Let me seek to quiet and pacify one other fear. "Nay, but," say you, "I never can be saved; for when I look at other people, at God's own true children,--I am ashamed to say it,--I am but a miserable copy of them. So far from attaining to he image of my Master, I fear I am not even like my Master's servants. Look at such-an-one, how he preaches the truth with power, what fluency he has in prayer, what service he undertakes! But I--I am such a beginner in grace, that

'Hosannas languish on my tongue,
And my devotion dies.'

I live at a poor dying rate. I sometimes run, but oftener creep, and seldom or ever fly. Where others are shaking mountains, I am stumbling over mole-hills. The saints seem to bestride this narrow world like

some great colossus, but I walk under their huge legs, and peep about, to find myself a poor dishonoured slave. I have no power, no strength, no might." Pause, brother, pause; stop thy murmuring for a moment. If some little star in the sky should declare it was not a star, because it did not shine as brightly as Sirius or Arcturus, how foolish would be its argument! If the moon should insist upon it that she was never made by God, because she could not shine as brightly as the sun, fie on her pale face, that she cannot be content to be what her Lord hath made her! If the nettle would not bloom, because it was not a pine, and if the hyssop on the wall refused to row, because it was not a cedar, oh! What dislocation would there be in the noble frame of this universe! If these murmurings that vex us vexed the whole of God's creatures, then were this earth a howling wilderness indeed. Now, let me talk to thee a moment, to calm thy fears. Hast thou, my brother, ever learned to distinguish between grace and gifts? For know that they are marvellously dissimilar. A man may be saved who has not a grain of gifts; but no man can be saved who hath no grace. Yonder brother who prayed, yonder friend who preaches, yonder sister who spoke--all these perhaps acted so well, because God had given hem excellent gifts. It might not be that it was because of grace. When you are in the prayer-meeting, and hear a brother extremely fluent, remember that there are men quite as fluent about their daily business, and that fluency is not fervency, and that even the appearance of fervency is not absolutely an evidence that there is fervency in the soul. If thou art so mean a thing that thou canst not spell a word in any book, or put six words together grammatically, if thou canst offer no prayer in public, if thou art so poor a scholar that every fool is wiser than thou art, yet if thou hast grace in thy heart, thou art saved, and that is the matter in point just now, whether thou art saved or not. "Covet

earnestly the best gifts;" but still, sit not down and murmur because thou hast them not, for one grain of grace outweighs a pound of gifts; one particle of grace is far more precious than all the gifts that Byron ever had, or that Shakespeare ever possessed within his soul, vast and almost infinite though the gifts of those men certainly were. And yet another question would I put to you. My dear brother, have you ever learned to distinguish between grace that saves, and the grace which develops itself afterwards? Remember, there are some races that are absolutely necessary to the saving of the soul; there are some others that are only necessary to its comfort. Faith, for instance, is absolutely necessary for salvation; but assurance is not. Love is indispensible; but that high degree of love which induces the martyr's spirit, does not reign in the breast of ever one, even of those who are saved. The possession of grace in some degree is needful to salvation; but the possession of grace in the highest degree, though it be extremely desirable, is not absolutely necessary for an entrance into heaven. Bethink thee, then, thus to thyself, if I be the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold, I would be happy to think that I am in the flock; if I be the smallest babe in Jesus' family, I will bless his name to think that I have a portion among the sanctified. If I be the smallest jewel in the Saviour's crown, I will glisten and shine as best I can, to the praise of him that bought me with his blood. If I cannot make such swelling music in the orchestra of heaven as the pealing organ may, then will I be but as a bruised reed, which may emit some faint melody. If I cannot be the beacon fire that scares a continent, and throws its light across the deep, I will seek to be the glow-worm that may at least let the weary traveller know something of its whereabouts. O Christians! Ye that have but little beginnings, quiet your fears; for these little beginnings, if they be of God, will save your soul, and

you may in this rejoice, yes, rejoice exceedingly.

I must ask your patience now while I turn to the second head, and I shall dwell upon that very briefly indeed.

II. Upon this head I wish to say a word or two for THE CONFIRMATION OF YOUR FAITH. I am sure you will give me your prayerful attention while I speak for the confirmation of my own faith as well as yours.

Well, brothers and sisters, the first confirmation I would offer you is this:--Our beginnings are very, ver small, but we have a joyous prospect in our text. Our later end shall greatly increase; we shall not always be so distrustful as we are now. Thank God, we look for days when our faith shall be unshaken, and firm as mountains be. I shall not for ever have to mourn before my God that I cannot love him as I would. I trust that he in my latter end will give me more of his Spirit, that I shall love him with all my heart, and soul, and strength. We have entered into the gospel school; we are ignorant now, but we shall one day understand with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We have hope that, as these hairs grow grey, we shall "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Time, that ploughs its furrow in the brow, we hope will sow the seeds of wisdom there. Experience, which shall furrow our back with many a sorrow and a wound, shall nevertheless, we trust, work patience, and nearer and sweeter fellowship than as yet we have come to know. Think not, Mr. Ready-to-halt, that thou shalt always need thy crutches; there may come days of leaping and of dancing even for thee. Oh, Mistress Despondency, the dungeons of Giant Despair's castle are not to be thy perpetual abode; thou, too, shall stand upon the top of Mount Clear, and thou shalt see the Celestial City, and the land that is very far off. We are growing things. Methinks I hear the green blade say this

morning, "I shall not for ever be trodden under foot as if I were but grass; I shall grow; I shall blossom; I shall row ripe and mellow; and many a man shall sharpen his sickle for me." I hear the little sapling say, "I shall not for ever be shaken to and fro by winds; I shall grow into an old stalwart oak; gnarled though the roots may be, and twisted though my branches are, I shall one day stand and outlaugh the tempest, while all its waves of wind break harmlessly over me." I shall be strong through him that strengthened me, for I feel a growth within me that can never stop till I have grown to be next to a God--a son of God, a partaker of the Divine nature. Courage then, courage, I say, brothers and sisters! These weak days are not always to last; we are not to be shorn lambs always, not always the weaklings of his cattle. We shall one day be as the firstlings of his bullocks, and we shall push our enemies to he ends of the earth, and tread upon them and destroy them.

But, further, this cheering prospect upon earth is quite eclipsed by a more cheering prospect beyond the river Death. "Our latter end shall greatly increase." Faith shall give place to fruition; hope shall be occupied with enjoyment; love itself shall be swallowed up in ecstacy. Mine eyes, ye shall not for ever weep; there are sights of transport for you. Tongue, thou shalt not for ever have to mourn, and be the instrument of confession; there are songs and hallelujahs for thee. Feet, yet shall not always be weary with this rough road; there are celestial leapings for you. O my poor heart, oft cowed and broken, often disappointed and trodden down, there waiteth for thee the palm-branch and the robe of victory, and the immortal crown.

"My spirit leaps across the flood,
And antedates the hour,"

when I shall come into possession of these joys which could not belong

to my childhood here, but which await me in my manhood up there, when the spirit shall be perfected, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Courage, Christian!

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long;"

and the end will make amends for all the toil that you can endure when on the road. Oh! Quicken thy footsteps, sit not down in despair. Thy latter end shall greatly increase, though thy beginnings be but small. Perhaps some one may say, "How is it that we are so sure that our latter end will increase?" I give you just these reasons:--we are quite sure of it because there is a vitality in our piety. The sculptor may have oftentimes cut in marble some exquisite statue of a babe. That has come to its full size; it will never grow any greater. When I see a wise man in the world, I look at him as being just such an infant. He will never grow any greater. He has come to his full. He is but chiselled out by human power; there is no vitality in him. The Christian here one earth is a babe, but not a babe in stone--a babe instinct with life. It is a happy thought sometimes to have of one's-self as sitting down here, compressed, small, insignificant; and one day Death shall come and say, "Rise to thy proper altitude," and we shall begin to grow and expand; and bursting all our cerements and every limit of humanity, we shall become greater than the angels are. I think it is Milton who pictures the spirits in Pandemonium as condensing themselves, so that multitudes of hem could sit in a little space, and then at their own volition mounting up till they attained a prodigious height. So is it now. We are little spirits, but we shall grow and increase, and we know this because there is life in us--eternal life. Now, the life of twenty years develops itself into something vastly superior to what it was in childhood; and what will the eternal life be when that vitality within us shall make the

littleness of our beginning seem as nothing at all, when our latter end shall have greatly increased?

Besides this, we feel hat we must come to something better, because God is with us. We are quite certain that what we are, cannot be the end of God's design. When I see a block of marble half chiselled, with just perhaps a hand peeping out from the rock, no man can make me believe that that is what the artist means it should be. And I know I am not what God would have me to be, because I feel yearnings and longings within myself to be infinitely better, infinitely holier and purer than I am now. And so is it with you; you are not what God means you to be; you have only just begun to be what he wants you to be. He will go on with his chisel of affliction, using wisdom and the graving-tool together, till by-and-bye it shall appear what you shall be for, you shall be like him, and you shall see him as he is. Oh! What comfort this is for our faith, that from he fact of our vitality and the fact that God is at work with us, it is clear, and true, and certain, that our latter end shall be increased. I do not think that any man yet has ever got an idea of what a man is to be. We are only the chalk crayon, rough drawings of men, yet when we come to filled up in eternity, we shall be marvellous pictures, and our latter end indeed shall be greatly increased.

And now, one other thought and I will turn to the last point.

Christian! Remember, for the encouragement of thy poor soul, that what thou art now is not the measure of thy safety; thy safety depends not upon what thou art, but on what Christ is. If the Rock of our salvation ere within us, indeed the house would soon be over-turned; but we live by what Christ is.

"What Adam had, and forfeited for all,
That Jesus is, who cannot fail or fall."

Till he can falter, my spirit need not tremble; till Jesus sins, till Jesus dies, till Jesus is overcome, till he is powerless with his God, till he ceases to be Divine, the soul that trusts him must be secure. Look not within thee for consolation, but look above, where Jesus pleads before the throne of the efficacy of his once-offered blood, and if thou wilt look at thy own state, and then judge thine eternal standing by thine own feelings, or willings, or doings, thou wilt be an undone and miserable wretch. Measure thyself by Jesus' doings, by Jesus' standing, by Jesus' acceptance, by the love of his heart, by the power of his arm, by the Divinity of his nature, by the constancy of his faithfulness, by the acceptance of his blood, by the prevalence of his plea; and so measuring, thy faith need never, never fear--

"For should the earth's old pillar's shake,
And all the walls of nature break,
Our steadfast souls need fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar."

III. Now for our last point, namely, FOR THE QUICKENING OF OUR DILIGENCE.

It was never intended that the promises of God should make men idle; and when we tell hem that their small beginnings shall doubtless come to glorious endings, we tell hem this for their encouragement--not that they may sit still and do nothing, but that they may gird up the loins of their mind, confident of their success, to do all that lieth in them, God helping them. Men and brethren, there are many of you here, who, like myself, have to mourn over little beginnings. Let me say to you, be ver diligent in the use of those means which God has appointed for your spiritual growth.

First, take heed to yourself that you obey the commandments which relate to the ordinances of Christ. Neglect not baptism. True, there is

nothing saving in it, nothing meritorious; but baptism is a means of grace. There have been many, who have found, like the eunuch, that when they have been baptised they have gone on their way rejoicing--rejoicing as the effect of grace given when they have obeyed their Master.

Be careful, too, not to neglect that most blessed Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but let him be known to you in the breaking of bread, and in pouring forth of wine. Do this often in remembrance of him. Ah! I am speaking to some here to-day who love Jesus, but who have neglected his last dying injunction, "This do in remembrance of me;" and you have not grown in grace, and are still little in Israel, as you used to be. Do you wonder at it? You have neglected God's appointed means. "Oh," saith one, "but I am a spiritual man; I do not need these carnal ordinances." There is no man so carnal as he who calls God's ordinances carnal, and no man more spiritual than he who finds spiritual things best brought home to him by what others have ventured to call "beggarly elements." We do not know ourselves if we think we can dispense with these divine signs. Christ knew what was best for us. He has said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be baptized." He would not have appended the last command if it were not important. He has bidden us also, as oft as we drink the cup, to do it in remembrance of him. He would not have commanded us that, if it were not for our benefit and for his glory.

But further, if thou wouldst get out of the littleness of thy beginnings, wait much upon the means of grace. Read much the Word of God alone. Seek out one who understandeth it well--a man whom God hath taught in it--and listen hou with reverence to the Word as it is preached. Frequent sermons, but prayers most. Praying is the end of

preaching. Make use of ever means that lieth before thee. Be not like the fool, who calls the books of the old father "dead men's brains." What God spake to seers of old, what he spoke to mighty men who preached, is not to be thus despised. Read thou as thou canst, and learn as thou canst. Take care, too, that thou art not content with skimming over a page of Scripture; but seek to get the ver marrow out of it. Be not as the butterfly, which flits from flower to flower, but rests nowhere; be thou as the bee, which enters the flower-bell, and sucks the honey and bears it off upon its heavily-laden thigh. Rest not till thou hast fed on the Word; and thus shall thy little beginnings come to great endings.

Be much also in prayer. God's plants grow fastest in the warm atmosphere of the closet. The closet is a forcing-place for spiritual vegetation. He who would be well fed and grow strong, must exercise himself upon his knees. Of all raining practice for spiritual battles, knee practice is the most healthy and strengthening. Note that, if thou forgettest aught besides.

And, lastly, if thy beginning be but small, make the best use of the beginning that thou hast. Hast thou but one talent? Put it out at interest, and make two of it. Hast thou two? Seek to have them multiplied into four. Art thou a babe? If thou canst not walk, nor lift, nor carry, thou canst cry. Take care to cry right lustily. Art thou a child? Thou canst not climb; thou canst not as yet teach; but thou canst run. Take care to run in the ways of heavenly obedience. Art thou a young man? Thou canst not as yet give the reverend advice of hoary age; but be strong, and overcome the wicked one. Art thou an old man? Thou canst not now fight the battles of thy youth, nor lead the van in heroic deeds, but thou canst abide with the stuff, and guard those old doctrines which, like the heavy baggage of the army, must not

be lost, lest the battle itself should go from us. Ever man to his place and to his post. By thus diligently using what we have, we shall gain more. Rivers increase by their onward flow, flames by burning; sunlight increases by the sun's sining, lights by kindling other lights. And so do thou. Do thou grow rich by enriching others--rich by spending. Lengthen out thyself by cutting off the ends that thou canst spare from all thou hast, for it is the way to grow; by giving up that which was an excresence thou shalt get that which shall be a real growth. Oh! Use thyself, and God shall make use of thee; come out, and God shall lead thee forth. Be a man, and God shall make thee more than an angel, and God shall make thee something more. He will make thee better, holier, happier, greater. Oh! Do this, and so shall hy latter end be joyous, thy peace shall be like a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Thus, I have spoken this for the comfort of God's people--would that I could hope that all I have said belonged to all of you! But, ah! if it does not, may God convert you, may the new life be given to you! Oh! Remember, if you are longing for it, the way of salvation is freely opened to you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

God bless us now and ever, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Personal Service

A Sermon

(No. 312)

Delivered on Thursday Evening, May 3rd, 1860, by the

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At Surrey Chapel, Blackfriar's Road,

ON BEHALF OF THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

"O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid thou hast loosed my bonds."--Psalm 116:16.

THESE SENTENCES SUGGEST a contrast. David's religion was one of perfect liberty;--"Thou hast loosed my bonds." It was one of complete service;--"Truly l am thy servant. I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid." Did I say the text suggested a contrast? Indeed the two things need never be contrasted, for they are found to be but part of one divine experience in the Jives of all God's people. The religion of Jesus is the religion of liberty. The true believer can say, when his soul is in a healthy state, "Thou hast loosed my bonds. The penal fetters with which my soul was once bound are all dashed to shivers; I am free!" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The burdensome bonds of ceremonials are all cast to the winds. Henceforth the beggarly elements are trodden under foot; shadows have yielded to substance, and the type and the symbol cease to oppress; the true light now shineth, and the torches are quenched. "Thou hast loosed my bonds,"--that is to say, thou hast not only saved me from the penal consequences of my sin and from the heavy burden of the old Mosaic ceremonial law, but thou hast moreover delivered me from the spirit of

bondage which once led me to serve thee with the fear of an unwilling slave. Thou hast taken the yoke from my neck, and the goad from behind my back. Thou hast made me thy freed man. No more do I crouch at thy feet or go to thy footstool cowering like a slave, but I came to thee with privilege of access, up to thy very throne. By the Spirit of adoption I cry, my Father. Thou dost own the kindred. For by the self-same Spirit I am sealed to the day of redemption. Thus, O Lord, "thou hast loosed my bonds." Nor if religion has had its full sway in us, is this all. Thou hast loosed me from the bonds of worldly maxims; thou hast delivered me from the fear of man; thou hast rescued me from the stooping and fawning which made me once the slave of every tyrant who laid claim to my allegiance, and thou hast made me now the servant of but one Master, whose service is perfect liberty. Whereas before I spoke with bated breath, lest I should offend, and even my condolence had continually to yield to the whims and prejudices of another man, behold now "thou hast loosed my bonds." As an eagle with my eye on the sun, with wings outstretched true to the line upward which I soar, bound no longer to the rooks of prejudice or the mounds of worldly maxim--free, entirely free to serve my God without let or hindrance.--"Thou hast loosed my bonds." Vast and wide is the liberty of the believer. The Antinomian, when he essays to describe gospel liberty, only errs by forgetting that such liberty is consistent with the fullest service. But we enjoy all the liberty that even an Antinomian theology could offer. A liberty to be holy is a grander liberty than a license to be sinful. A liberty to be conscientious; a liberty to know forgiven sin; a liberty to trample upon conquered lusts, this is an infinitely wider liberty than that which would permit me to be the comfortable slave of sin, and yet indulge the delusive hope that I may one day enter the kingdom of heaven. The largest

expressions that can ever be used by the boldest minister of free grace, cannot here be exaggerations. Luther may exhaust his thunders, and Calvin may spend his logic, Zuingle may utter his periods with fiery zeal, but after all the grand things that have been spoken about the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, we are freer than those men knew. Free as the very air we breathe is the Christian, if he live up to his privileges. If he be in bondage at all, it is because he hath not as yet yielded his spirit fully to the redeeming and emancipating influence of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the fullest and widest sense therefore, the believer may cry, "Thou hast loosed my bonds." Nor is this liberty merely consistent with the profoundest and most reverent service, but the service is, indeed, a main characteristic of the exalted freedom.

"Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid." This does not convict with the sentence that follows it,--"Thou hast loosed my bonds." This fact of my being God's servant is to me a proof and evidence, my, and a delightful fruit and effect of my having kind my bonds loosed by the great Emancipator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Service then, as well as liberty I Service is ordained to be a constant characteristic of the true religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We are not our own, we are bought with a price." There is not n hair upon our head, there is not a passion in our spirit, there is not a single power or faculty in our mind which is our own. We are all bought--all purchased,--we are all, every single particle of us, the purchased property of the Lord Jesus Christ--perfectly free, and yet perfectly the property of Jesus--supremely blest with the widest liberty, and yet in the fullest sense the property of another--the shackled servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. This service, my brethren, it appears from the text, should be true,--"O Lord, truly I am thy

servant " I fear there is very much service of God that only lies in terms and words. Men sit and sing hymns, in which they cry--

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

But within an hour their nets belie their song. There is much of service in our own thought which never comes to service in net. I do not doubt but that we often compliment ourselves upon schemes we have devised, which fall dead to the ground, like blasted figs, never having been carried into effect. We go to our chambers and bend our knees, and Satan whispers some word of self-satisfaction to us, because we have some project on our soul, some device in our heart, though that project has never come to service, has only been an unborn intention, has never come into the life of an act. I would that each one of us knew more fully the meaning of this word, "truly." "O Lord, truly I am thy servant;" so truly that mine enemies cannot dispute it; so truly that if they dare dispute it, my next action shall contradict them; so truly that never in any act of my life shall I give them reason to suppose the contrary; so truly thy servant, that my thoughts yield thee obedience as well as my hands my head as well as my heart; my heart as well as my feet. "Truly I am thy servant!" Not so in name and by profession, but so by actual deeds of holy endurance, and of noble daring for thee. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant." This service, it appears to me also from the text, is continual. "I am thy servant," is the utterance at this moment. "I am thy servant," is the utterance of the next. "I am thy servant," is my utterance to-day. "I am thy servant," will be my utterance when I come to die. Never should the Christian think that any other language will ever be in his lips

anything less than traitorous. "I am thy servant," is to be the exclamation of the man the moment his spirit knows its sins forgiven. "I am thy servant" is to be his constant monitor when he stands exposed to temptation; it is to be his continual spur when idleness in a Laodicean spirit would make him lukewarm. "I am thy servant" is it to be his joy in the time of the hardest of labor. "I am thy servant" is to be his song in the time of the sternest suffering. Continually and ever we are the servants of God. We may change our masters upon earth, but our Master who is in heaven is our Master for ever We may cease to serve our country. but we could not cease to serve our God. We may cease to be linked with any denomination, but we could not cease to be the servants of Christ. Even should it be possible for us to be so forgetful of our obligations as to dream for a moment of not being the servants of the Church, we could not harbor the thought that we should cease to be the servants of Christ. "I am thy servant." Let the next moment repeat it; let the next hour echo it, let the next year continue to resound it; let my whole life prolong it; and let eternity be a continuation of the solemn swell. "Truly, I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." May I take the liberty now after offering you these few remarks by way of introduction, as a sort of running commentary upon my text--may I take the liberty of concentrating your thoughts upon one particular, during the rest of my sermon. There is one important point which I wish to bring before this prevent audience, namely, the duty and the excellence of personal service for their Lord and Master. I think I shall be warranted in confining my text, although it contains far more, to the repetition of that pronoun "I," "Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of thine handmaid: thou has loosed my bonds." The personality of the text seems to be conspicuous to allow me now to

restrain myself to that one topic--the duty of the personal service of Christ. I do feel at this peculiar season, when God as visited some parts of our land with rich revival, and when we have reason to hope that revival will extend through this great city, I do feel just mew that no topic can be more adapted to the times than the topic of personal service--personal consecration of every Christian to his Lord's will.

This evening, then, I shall first speak upon the nature of personal service; secondly, its reasonableness; thirdly, its excellence; and in the last place, come to that which is no doubt upon your own minds, the special assistance which the Religious Tract Society yields to personal effort in the Redeemer's kingdom.

I. First, then, THE NATURE OF PERSONAL SERVICE. Let me explain it by a contrast. The service of God among us has grown more and more a service by proxy. I would not be censorious. Judge ye what I say, and if there be but any measure of truth in it, let the truth come home to your soul. Do we not observe even in the outward worship of God, at times a great attempt towards worship by proxy? Do we not often hear singing--certainly never in this place--but do we not often hear singing the praises of God confined to some five or six or more trained men and women who are to praise God for us? Do we not sometimes have the dreary thought, when we are in our churches and chapels, that even the prayer is said and prayed by the minister for us? There is not always that hearty union in the one great prayer of the day which there should be whenever we are gathered together. The thought suggests itself continually to the thinking mind, "Is not much of the devotion confined to the minister, and to those few who pass through the service?", in fact, we have actually degraded ourselves by applying the term "performance" to divine worship. "Performance!" A phrase begotten

in the theater, which certainly should have spent its existence there, has actually been brought into the house of God, and the services are now-a-day "performed," and the worship of God is gone through, and the thing is called the "doing duty" of the minister, and not the taking delight and the enjoying of a pleasure by the people. Do we not observe, too, that in an our churches there is too much now-a-day of serving God in acts of benevolence, and acts of public instruction through the minister! Your minister is supported; you expect him to discharge your duty for you; he is to he the means of converting sinners; he is to be the means of comforting the feeble minded; in fact, all the mass of duties that belong to the Church are considered to belong to the one man who is specially set apart to devote himself to the service of the ministry. Oh that this were rectified! Would to God that our people could all feel that no support of ministers can ever rid them of their own personal responsibility! I think I speak in the name of all my brethren in the ministry--we repudiate the idea of taking your responsibility upon ourselves. We find that our own work is more than we can perform without our Master's strength. To come at last with clean hands before our Maker's bar, and to be able to say, "We are free from the blood of all men," will be as much as with the most arduous labors, and the most unremitting anxieties, we can expect to attain unto. We cannot take your work--we do not pretend to do so. If you have dreamed of it, forget the delusion, and be rid of it once for all. I will do no man's duty but my own; I will not attempt to stand sponsor to your remissness, and take upon myself the sin of your sloth and lethargy; nor will any minister of Christ for a moment think that his most arduous efforts, and most self-denying exertions, can for a moment acquit you of being guilty of the blood of souls, unless you, each of you, do personally the utmost that you can. A sorry contrast to

this principle, I fear, is presented in many, many a Christian Church. You have put one man into the rank, and he is to do all, while you are to sit still to be fed, to be edified, to be built up, as if you had nothing to do but to be stones and bricks that are to be built up, and not living men and women, who are to spend and be spent in the Redeemer's cause.

Having thus sought to exhibit by contrast, let me now illustrate the nature of this personal service by an actual picture. Look at the early days of Christendom--the Church's pride and glory--when the purest air and the most refreshing dew were upon her mouth--then was the day of personal service. The moment a man was converted to God in those days, he became a preacher; perhaps, within a week, a martyr. Every man then was a witness,--not here and there a bishop, or now and then a confessor--but every Christian whether he moved in Caesar's household, or whether he moved, like Lydia, in the pursuits of humble commerce--every believer had a part in the service, and sought to magnify the name of his Master. Within but a few centuries after the death of Christ, the cross had been uplifted in every land; the name of Jesus had been pronounced in every known dialect; missionaries had passed through the deserts had penetrated into the remote recesses of uncivilized countries; the whole earth was at least, nominally evangelized.

But what has befallen us now, my brethren? The results of the labors of the Church through a space of years--what are they? They dribble into utter insignificance, when compared with the triumphs of the Apostolic times, and my own conviction is, that next to what I fear is the great cause--the absence of the Spirit's influence--next to that, and perhaps first of all, is the absence of personal agency in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the Spirit is manifested in the diversities

of his operations. What conqueror or mighty warrior could expect to will a campaign if his troops should vote that one in a hundred should be supported by their rations--that one in a hundred should go to battle? No, ye legions! you must every one of you draw swords. Every heart must be stout, and every arm must be strong; the line must not be composed of here and there a warrior and an interval between, but every man must march forward, with the spirit of a lion and the strength of God, to do battle against the common enemy of souls. We shall never see great things in the world tin we have all roused ourselves to our personal responsibilities. God will not give the honor of saving the world to his ministers. He meant it for his Church; and until his Church is prepared to grasp it, God will withhold the grown which he has prepared for her brow, and for hers alone, and which none but she can over will. I think you may readily understand then what I mean by personal service. I mean this: if there be poor, it is not for you to subscribe to a society that shall send out paid agents for their relief but as far as lieth in you to visit them in their homes, and with your own hands supply them the bounty of a Christian heart. It is not for you to say the City Mission supplies admirably the lack of a sufficient number of ministers; the whole lack is supplied, I may be idle. It is for you to instruct them. You are to be as a burning and a shining light in the midst of this dark generation. Personal service is for you; it is for you to say, "Though I am content with my minister's labors, I cannot be content with my own. I must have more, and more, and more to do. I desire to spend all that I have in Jesus Christ's cause, and not to keep back a single power which I possess, but to be continually the living servant of the living God."

II. Having thus explained the nature of personal service, let me pass on to observe THE REASONABLENESS OF THIS PERSONAL SERVICE.

Heir of heaven, blood-bought and blood-washed, Jesus did not save thee by another. He did not sit in heaven himself at ease and then array Gabriel in his power and might and send him down to suffer, bleed, and die for you; but "He, his own self,"--mark the strong expression of Scripture--"His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree. "He might send out apostles and seventy disciples to preach, but he never relaxed his service when he employed others. He might kindle other lights, but he did not quench his own. He was himself your servant. He washed the disciples' feet, not through the medium of another disciple, but with his own hands. They fed the hungry, but he himself multiplied the fishes and brake the bread. He sent the gospel into the world, but not by missionaries, but by himself; he became his own preacher, his own expounder and then left the truth to be taken up by others, when he himself had ascended into glory. By the streaming veins, then, of the Lord Jesus Christ; by the blessed body which for your sake endured the curse--the curse of toil, aggravated till it became not the sweat of the face, but the sweat of the heart in very drops of blood--by these I hold the reasonableness of your personal service to him; and "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

But, again, have you not a personal religion? You are not content with promises that are held in a sort of "joint stock" by the entire community; you long to have in your own heart the personal cry of adoption; nothing but vital personal union to the ton of God can ever satisfy you. You are not content with the general election; you feel that you must have a personal election and a personal calling. You long to read your title clear to mansions in the skies. The charter of free grace, bright as it is, doth not satisfy you unless you can see your

name amongst its inheritors. All the broad acres of the promises cannot charm you, you can walk over them and can them your own. You live, if you be a true Christian, you live upon the personal realization of your interest in that covenant of grace. What more reasonable than that you should give personal service? Were I preaching to those who were dolts, this might be seen and felt too; but I speak to those who are wise men, because they have been taught of God, and I say--what can be a more logical conclusion than that personal benefits enjoyed, and personal blessings received, should be reciprocated by personal cervices rendered?

Further, let me remark to you that this personal service is reasonable, from the fact that personal service is the only kind of service at all available. I scarcely know whether you can serve God except by individual consecration. All that your minister can do is already due from him to God. You could not say before the eternal throne, "Great God, I am thy servant, but I serve thee by another." Might he not reply, "That other was my servant too?" Here is a man who has spent his whole life, and whom you have felt to do so; does he come before God and cry, "Great God, I have done all, and I have a surplus left to supplement the dilatory character of my fellows?" No; when we have done all, we are unprofitable servant; we have done no more than it was our duty to have done. How, then, can you by any means hope that you can serve God through us, when eve ourselves feel we cannot reach the mark to which we would have aspired in our own personal service to Jesus? Oh I brothers and sisters, if you will but think of it, all your idea of showing your gratitude to God by making another man to carry your burden on his back, is founded on idleness, and cannot be maintained in righteousness. More might I say, but I choose instead thereof to appeal to you thus:--Does not the reasonableness of personal service strike

you at once? If it does not, there was a time when it did. E thou be a child of God, there was a season when argument was quite unnecessary to thee. Dost thou remember the time when thy sins lay heavily upon thy breast, and thou didst cry both night end day, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Hast thou forgotten that glad hour when at the foot of Mercy's cross all the strings were loosed that bound that burden to thy back, and thou west free? Hast thou forgotten, then, those feelings of devout gratitude which made thee fall to the ground and cry, "My Master, take me; make something of me; do what thou wilt with me, only let me serve thee?" Most thou remember that hot haste in which thou didst rush into the world to tell to another the secret which God had whispered in thine ear? Dost thou remember now that first month of thy consecration to God, when thou couldest not do enough, when thou didst long to be rid even of necessary worldly employment's, that thou mightest devote thyself to God? Methinks I hear those sighs of thine now,--"O that I were a doorkeeper in the house of my God I O that I could serve my Master with all my might, and with all my strength!" Ah, brethren I and if thou needest argument now, what doth it betoken but that thou best lost thy first love, and that thou hast fallen from the height of thy consecration? It seems to be believed by some men, who pretend to deep experience, that the love of Christians necessarily cools after conversion. I am sure it ought not to do so; and if it does, it were a feet which were disgraceful to us. To my mind, it is palpable that if we loved our Master much when we first knew him, we ought to love him with a tenfold degree of fervent attachment after we have known him more. Certain I am, if we have seen Christ, the very Christ, and have verily seen him, we shall be more deeply in love with him every day; whereas at first we thought him lovely, we shall come to know him so; and whereas once we thought anything we could do would be too little,

we shall come to think that everything we could do would not be enough. I question that man's love altogether, who has to say of it, that it grew cold after a little season. What! Is the work of God's Spirit but a sort of spasmodic twitching. Is this all the Spirit does, to lay the lash upon the back of the ass and make it go its jaded journey for an instant with a little more quickened pace? Surely not God doth not thus work. It were an inferior work to any which is exhibited in nature if this were all he did. And shall grace be second to the deeds of nature? Does God send the planets on in their orbits, and do they continue to roll, and after he hath made a creature serve him, will he stop? Does he light the sun and does he blaze for ever, and will he kindle our zeal, and shall it soon be quenched? Is God's grace as the smoke from the chimney, as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away? God forbid that we should harbour the idea! No, brethren; and personal service, personal continued service too, is but the reasonable effect of that grace which God gave us at the first, and which he continues to give us every hour, and will give us till we mount to eternal glory.

III. And now let me advance to my third point--PERSONAL SERVICE--ITS EXCELLENCE,

This excellence is so manifold, that had I some three hours to preach in, I might continue to go through the list and not exhaust it. Among the first of its charms, personal service is the main argument of the Christian religion against the sceptic. The sceptic says the religion of Christ is maintained by men who make a gain of godliness. "Your living is dependent upon your advocating the canes," says the infidel. Even to our missionaries this is often said, and though an unworthy suspicion and utterly untrue of men who sacrifice much even when they gain most, uttered to men who in any other service might soon grow

rich--in their Masters service seldom, if ever--yet nevertheless, the taunt being never so unworthy, it has great power over unthinking minds. Let the Church, however, but beam to work unanimously; lot every private man have his mission, let every man and woman beam to build nearest to their own house, and from that day scepticism begins to lose, at least; one of its argument; and with it, it loses one of its most formidable elements--one of its deadliest weapons with which it has attacked the Church. "See there, see there," says the infidel, "there is an honest man, though he be an honest fool he does at least believe what he says, for he does it not by word, but personally, he doer it not by another, but by himself; not because he is paid for it, but because he loves it." Oh, sirs! it were greatly to the confusion of infidelity, if not to in utter destruction, if the whole Church could once see in its proper light, and carry out in its full measure, the grand doctrine of personal service. But further, I am persuaded that while it would be a grand argument against sceptics, it would be one of the greatest means of deciding that glass of waverers, who, although they are not skeptical, are negligent of the things of the kingdom. There is no way to make another man earnest like being earnest one's-self. If I see others who neglect the great salvation, and is I neglect it too, I patronize, and aid, and abet them in their neglect; but if that man sees me earnest about his salvation, he begins at once to put to himself the question, "Why is this? Here am I asleep and going down into hell, and this man who is no relation of mine, and who has no personal interest in me, is grieved, pained, and vexed because I am going wrong, and he cannot rest and be quiet because he fears I am in danger of the wrath to come." Oh! my brethren, there would be more souls, I do believe, moved to earnestness by earnestness, than by aught else. The closest logic, the most mighty rhetoric never convinced a

soul so well as that mightiest of logic and of rhetoric--the earnestness of a true Christian. Let men who are now slothful see us in earnest, and they will begin to follow in our wake, God will bless our example to them, and through us they will be saved. But further, the excellency of personal service, it strikes me, is not confined to the good we do, but should be argued from the good we get. We have in our Churches, men and women who are always looking for an opportunity for quarreling. If there be a member who has made the slightest slip, they report it to the public, they tell it in Gath, and publish it in the streets of Askelon. There is nothing that is right. If you do a thing to-day, it is wrong; if you were to alter it to-morrow, it would be just as wrong. They are never consistent in anything but in their inconsistent grumbling. The mightiest cure for the Church is to set them to work. Armies are troublesome things, even emperors find they must allow these hungry things to blunt their appetite with war. The Church itself can never be much blessed while it hath division in its own ranks. Its very activity will cause disorder; the very earnestness in the Christian will cause confusion, unless you lead forth that earnestness to its proper field of development. I have always found that where there is a quarrelsome Church, it is sure to be an idle Church, and where men are always "at it," they have very little time to find fault with one another. When we fuse iron, the two pieces will soon weld, bring two cold pieces together, and the stoutest arm and the heaviest hammer can never weld them. Let our Churches be united and they will be earnest; let them be cold, and they will be dashed to a thousand shivers. "And moreover, we have a large class of poor creatures, who, while not discontent with others, are discontent with themselves. They don't fight with other people, but they seem to be incessantly quarreling with a personal jealousy of their ownselves.

They are not what they like to be, and they are not what they wish to be, and they don't feel as they should feel, and they don't think as they would like to think. They are always plunging their finger into their own eyes a, because they cannot see so well as they would wish, always ripping up the wounds they have, because those wounds smart, making themselves miserable in order that they may be happy, and at last, crying themselves into an inconsolable state of misery, they acquire a habit of mourning, until that mourning seems to be the only bliss they know. To use a homely illustration, and one which will be remembered, if another might not, the swiftest way for these cold souls to warm themselves is by setting them at once to work. When we were boys, we have sometimes gathered round our father's fire in the winter time, and almost sat upon it, yet we could not get wane; we rubbed our fingers, but they stir kept blue, at length our father wisely turned us out of doors and bade us work, and after some healthy pastime we soon came in with limbs no longer benumbed; the blood was circulated, and what tire could not do, exercise soon accomplished. Ministers of Christ, if your people cry to you, "Comfort us! comfort us!--comfort them, and make the fire a good one; at the same time remember that all the fire you can ever kindle, will not warm them so long as they are idle. If they are idle they cannot be warm. God will not have his people eat the fat and drink the sweet, unless they are prepared to carry their burden and give a portion to others as well as seek meat for themselves. The benefit of personal service then is not confined to others, but will come to be enjoyed even by those who engage in it. An example or two here may tend to enforce the lesson I am anxious to inculcate. If you wish to prove the truth of this, you can begin to make a tolerable experiment in the course of the next half-hour. Do you want to feel grateful? Do not go home and get the hymn-book down. Just

go down this street here, and take the first turning to the left or the right, whichever you please. Go up the first pair of stairs you come to; you see a little room; perhaps the husband has come home by now--come home weary, and there is a swarm of children, all dirty, and so to live and sleep in; perhaps, that one room. Well, if you will only take a view of that with your own eyes, and then go home to your own house, you will begin to feel grateful. Or rise up to-morrow morning, and go to another house, and see a poor creature stretched on the bed of languishing, dependent on the parish allowance, and worse than that, dying with" our hope knowing nothing of God. or of the-way of salvation, and if that does not make you grateful when you think of your own interest in the precious blood of Jesus. I know nothing that will. Again, you want to be zealous and earnest. Next Sabbath morning walk down the New Cut, and if the open depravity does not make you earnest, your blood is fish's blood, and you have not the warmth of man's blood in you. Just see how the street is thronged all day with those who buy and sell, and get gain, while you are meeting in the house of God for prayer and praise. If that should not satisfy you, and you want to feel peculiarly zealous take your walk abroad and not only look on but begin to act. Take your stand amidst the crowd near the Victoria Theatre, and try to preach, and if you do not feel desirous when you hear their clamours and see their anxious eyes, as if they longed to hear you with eyes as wed as ears--if that does not make you zealous, I know of nothing that will make you so. Take a handful of tracts in your hand, and a handful of coppers in your pocket--two good things together, and give some of each to the poor people, and they will recollect you; and after you have gone to those--the poorest and the most depraved--if you do not go home with a feeling of gratitude mingled with one of earnest zeal for the salvation of souls, I do not

know what remedy I can prescribe. I wish some of you fine ladies and gentlemen had the walking down some of out courts and alleys--nay; I would wish you to have a special treat that you might always remember. I would like you to sleep one night at a lodging-house, I should dike you to eat one meal with the poor man; I should like you to sit in the midst of one drunken brawl, I should wish you to see one poor wife, her face all bleeding, where a brutal and degrading husband ha. been striking her; I should like you to spend one Sabbath in the midst of sin and debauchery; I should like you to see one scene of vice, and then hurry you away once and for all. Methinks, if I took you there not only to see, but to act and cooperate in some holy deed of service; book you there that you might thrust your hand into the kennel, and bring up some lost jewel; that you might thrust your finger into the very fire, that you might pluck some bread from the burning, I think that usefulness would not be all on the part of others, but to a great degree react upon your own heart. You would go home and say, "I could not have behaved it; I could not have imagined that the necessities of this city were so great; that the need of praying and preaching, and generous liberality, could have been one-tenth so huge." I am sure if you be Christians, from that time forward, you would be more indefatigable in your industry, and more unlimited in your gifts than before. I must not tarry longer, time reproves me, though if it be that any of you shall carry thou out in practice, the time employed in persuading you will be well spent.

IV. I want now for a minute or two, to come to that Society, for which I stand here to plead to-night, and observe ITS PECULIAR ADAPTATION TO PERSONAL SERVICE.

We love the Missionary Society, both for home and abroad, though it does in measure help us to serve God by proxy. I love the Bible

Society, because that enables me to serve God personally. For the same reason, I moat ever love the Religious Tract Society, because that enables me, nay, compels me, if I would do anything, to do it myself. I think I need only just mention one or two particulars. The peculiar form of usefulness which the Religious Tract Society lays hold upon, is admirably adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless, wish to do something for Christ. They have not the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers. They do not feel that they could subscribe their guinea, but they may buy their thousand tracts, and these they can distribute broadcast. How many a little one in Zion has spent his life in doing this good, when he could not perhaps have found any other good within his reach. This however, is but the beginning--the smallest part of the matter. And when men begin with little efforts for Christ, such as the giving away of a tract, they become stronger to do something else afterwards. I speak personally to-night--and excuse the allusion--I remember the first service which my youthful heart rendered to Christ, was the doing up of tracts in envelopes, that might send them, with the hope that by choosing pertinent tracts, applicable to person. I knew, and then sealing them up, that God would bless them. And I well remember telling them and distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house, and telling in humble language, the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something. I sought to do something more and then from that something more, and now have I got beyond. And so I do not doubt that many of the servants of God have been led on to do something higher and nobler,

because the first step was for good.

I look upon the giving away of a religious tract as only the first step for action not to be compared with many another deed done for Christ; but were it not for the first step we might never reach to the second but that first attained, we are encouraged to take another, and so at the last, God helping us, we may be made extensively useful Besides, there is this to be said for the Society, that it does not make a man perform an act which looks like service but which is not. There is a real service of Christ in the distribution of the gospel in its printed form, a service the result of which heaven alone shall disclose, and the judgment-day alone discover. How many thousands have been carried to heaven instrumentally upon the wings of these tracts, none can tell. I might say, if it were right to quote such a Scripture, "The leaves were for the healing of the nations,"--verily they are so. Scattered where the whole tree could scarcely be carried, the very leaves have had a medicinal and a healing virtue in them and the real word of truth, the simple statement of a Savior crucified and of a sinner who shall be saved by simply trusting in the Savior, has been greatly blessed, and many thousand souls have been led into the kingdom of heaven by this simple means.

And now what shall I say to bind up what has been already said into a compact form! Let each one of us, if we have done nothing for Christ, begin to do something now. The distribution of tracts is the first thing. Let us do that and attempt something else by-and-bye. Are we, on the other hand, diligently engaged already in some higher service for Christ, let us not despise those steps which helped us up, but let us now assist others with these steps that they too may rise from the grade of service which is theirs to a higher and a greater one. Let us in fact encourage this society at all times with our contributions and

with our prayers. I would remind you that during this year the Tract Society has sent abroad some forty-two millions of tracts--some four and a half millions more than last year. These have been sent throughout the whole earth. Extensive as man, I may say has been the action of this society--not confined to any sect or denomination, or any class or clime. It has labored for all, and an Christians have labored with it, and God has given it a large measure of success.

I think I may leave it in your hands to-night; but permit me this one word ere I bid you farewell. Many of you I shall never see again, and I remember that my own sermon tells me that I have personal service to perform for Christ. It is not enough for me to urge you to do it, I must do it too. My hearers, imagine not that any service you can do for Christ will save your souls if you are unrenewed. If your faith is not fixed in Jesus, your best works will be but splendid sins. All the performance of duties will not affect your salvation. Cease from your own righteousness, cease from all deeds of working out life, and "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Trust Jesus, and you are saved, trust self, and you are lost. Just as you are, cast yourselves on Christ. I remember Dr. Hawker concluding an admirable discourse with these brief words:--The words were addressed to Rebecca of old: "Wilt thou go with this man?" Let me conclude with the like words:--Souls, will ye go with Christ? Will ye go to Christ?"

"I would go with him," saith one, "but would he have me." Did he ever reject one that came to him? "I would go with Christ," saith another, "but I am naked." He will clothe thee. "I would go to him," says a third, "but I am filthy." He can cleanse you; nay, his own blood shall wash you, and his own veins will supply the purifying stream. "I would go with him, saith another, " but I am diseased and leprous, and cannot walk with him." Ah! but he is a great physician, and he can heal thee.

Come as thou art to Christ. Many say, "But I cannot come." I remember a raying in the North of Ireland, in the revival, which just hits the mark. The young converts will say to one another, when one says, "I cannot come." "Brother, come if you can, and if you can't come, come as you can." Will you not come, when by coming to Christ you may save your soul? We do not know what faith is when we say to ourselves, "It is a something so mysterious I cannot reach it." Faith is trusting Christ. It is the end of mystery and the beginning of simplicity; the giving up of all those idle feelings and believings that aught else can save the soul, and the reception of that one master thought, that Christ Jesus is exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins. Never soul perished trusting Jesus, never heart was blasted with perdition that had confidently rested itself upon the cross. There is thy hope, poor shipwrecked mariner, yonder constellation of the cross with those five stars, the wounds of Jesus Look there and live. One glance and thou art saved. Those soul-quickening words, "Believe and live," comprehend the whole gospel of God. May the Divine Spirit lead you now out of self unto Christ. O Lord! command thy blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 26

Terrible Convictions and Gentle Drawings

A Sermon

(No. 313)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 6th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day, and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."--Psalm 32:3-4.

DAVID HERE DESCRIBES a very common experience amongst convinced sinners. He was subjected to extreme terrors and pangs of conscience. These terrors were continual; they scared him at night with visions, they terrified him all day with dark and gloomy forebodings. "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me." His pain was so extreme, that when he resorted to prayer he could scarcely utter an articulate word. There were groanings that could not be uttered within his spirit; and hence he calls his prayer roaring--a "roaring all the day long." Wherever he was, his spirit seemed to be always sighing, sending a full torrent of melancholy groans upwards towards God; a "roaring all the day long." So far did this groaning proceed, that at last his bodily frame began to show evidences of it. He grew old, and that not merely in the lines of the countenance and the falling in of the cheeks, but his very bones seemed as if they partook of the suffering. He became like an old man before his time. We have heard of some who through severe trouble have had their hair blanched in a single night. But here was a man who did not show merely externally, but even internally, the heavy pressure of grief, on account of sin. His bones grew old, and the sap of his life,

the animal spirits, were all dried up; his "moisture was turned into the drought of summer." So intimate is the connection between the body and the soul, that when the soul suffers extremely, the body must be called to endure its part of grief. Verily in this ease it was but simple justice, for David had sinned with his body and with his soul too. By fornication he had defiled his members; he had looked out from his eyes with lustful desires, and had committed iniquity with his body, and now the frame which had become the instrument of unrighteousness, becomes a vehicle of punishment, and his body bears its share of misery,--"my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." We gather from what David says in this Psalm, and indeed in all these seven penitential Psalms that his convictions on account of his sin with Bathsheba, and his subsequent murder of Uriah, were of the deepest and most poignant character, and that the terrors he experienced were indescribable, filling his soul with horror and dismay.

Now, this morning, I propose to deal with this case, so common among those who are under conviction of sin. There are many, who, when the Lord is bringing them to himself, are alarmed by reason of the hardness of the stroke with which he smites them, and the sternness of the sentence which he pronounces against them. After having dealt very solemnly with that character, I shall then turn and spend a fear moments in trying to comfort another class of parsons, who, strange to say, are without comfort, because they do not have these terrors, and are unhappy because they have never experienced this unhappiness. Strange perversity of human nature, that when God sends the terrors we doubt, and when he withholds them we doubt none the less. May God the Spirit bless my discourse doubly to these two different conditions of men.

I. First, then, let me address myself with lovingkindness to those who are now THE SUBJECTS OF GOD'S REBUKE AND THE TERRORS OF GOD'S LAW. To you would speak on this wise; first, detect the causes of your terror. In the second place tell you God's design in subjecting you thereto, and then point you to the great remedy.

1. As for the causes of your terror they are many, and perhaps in your case the cause may be so peculiar that the wit of man may not be able to discover it. Nevertheless, the remedy which I have to propound at the end, will most assuredly be adapted to your case, for it is a remedy which reaches all diseases, and is a panacea for all ills. You tell me you are sore troubled by reason of conviction, and that your convictions of sin are attended by the most terrible and gloomy thoughts, I am not at a loss to tell you why it is. I shall this morning borrow my divisions from quaint old Thomas Fuller, whose book happened to be thrown in my way this week by Providence, and as I cannot say better things than he said, I shall borrow much of his description of the causes of the terrors of conviction.

First, those wounds must be deep which are given by so strong a hand as that of God. Remember, sinner, it is God that is dealing with you; when you lay dead in your sins he looked on you, and now he has begun not only to look, but to smite; he is now wounding you with the design of afterwards making you whole; he is killing you that he may afterwards make you spiritually alive. You have now entered the lists with no other than the Almighty God; do you wonder, then, that when he smites, his blows fell you to the ground? Are you astonished that when he wounds, his wounds are deep and hard to heal? Besides, remember it is an angry God that you have to deal with; one who has had patience with you in your sins these thirty, forty, or fifty years, and now he has come forth himself to compel you to throw down the weapons of your

rebellion, and to take you captive by his justice, that he may afterwards set you free by his grace. Is it any marvel, then, that when an angry God--a God who has restrained his anger these many years--comes out in battle against you, you find it hard to resist him, and that his blows bruise you and break your bones, and make your spirit feel as if it must verily die, crushed beneath the mighty hand of a cruel one? Be not astonished at all your terrors; God on Sinai, when he came to give the law, was terrible; but God on Sinai, when he comes to bring the law into the conscience, and to strike it home, must be more terrible far. When God did but stretch out his hand with the two tables of stone, Moses did exceedingly fear and quake; but when he throws those tables of stone upon you, and makes you feel the weight of that law which you have broken, it is but little marvel that your spirit is bruised and mangled, and dashed into a thousand shivers. Again, it is no wonder that you are sore troubled when you remember the place where God has wounded you. He has not wounded you in your hand, or in your head, or in your foot; he is striking at your conscience--the eye of your soul; he wounds you in your heart--in your inmost soul. Every wound that God gives to the convicted man is a wound in the very heart--in the very vitals; he cuts into the core of the liver, and makes his darts cut through the gall, and parches your inward parts with agony. It is not now a disease that has laid hold merely on your skin or flesh, but it is a something which makes the life-floods boil with hot anguish. He has now shot his arrows into your inmost spirit, thrust his fingers into your eyes and put out their light. Oh! ye need not wonder that your pains are fearful, when God thus smites you on the tenderest part of a conscience which he has made tender by his grace. He may well smart that has salt rubbed into his wounds. You have been lashed with the ten-thonged whip of the law till

your heart is all bare and bleeding, and now God is scattering, as it were, the salt, and making all those wounds to tingle and smart. Oh! ye might wonder, if ye did not feel, when God is thus casting bitterness into the fountain of your life.

Besides these, there is a third cause for this your pain, namely, that Satan is now busy upon you. He sees that God is wounding you and he does not wish that those wounds shall heal; he therefore trusteth in his fangs, and teareth open the flesh, and trieth if he cannot pour his poison into that very flesh which God has been wounding with the sword. "Now," saith he, "that God is against him will I be against him too. God is driving him to sadness; I will drive him farther still, and urge him to despair. God has brought him to the precipice, to the edge of his self-righteousness, and bidden him look down and see the yawning gulf. Now," says Satan, "one push more, and over he will go." He has come forth, therefore, with all his strength, hoping that the hour of your conviction shall be also the hour of your condemnation. He will tempt you, perhaps, as he did Job, till you any, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." He will seek to bring you low, like Jeremiah, until you are ready to wish you had never been born, rather than that you should suffer like this. You can well understand, if a man had been wounded, that it were hard work for the most skillful surgeon to heal him if some vile wretch should tear away the liniments and rend open the wounds as fast as they began to close. Oh! pray against Satan! Cry aloud to your God to deliver you from this fiend, for he is the cause of much of your distress; and if you were rid of him, it may be that your wound would soon heal, and you would find peace. But, remember, the remedy that I shall have to propound to you is a remedy against devils. It is the fiend's confusion as well as sin's destruction. Let them come against you as they may. The remedy I

shall have to propound can heal the wounds of Satan, and the tearings of his tangs, as well as those sorrows of soul which God has brought upon you.

You may discover a yet further reason why you are so sore wounded, when you consider the terrible nature of that weapon with which God has wounded you. He had not made a little gash with some slender instrument, but if I understand your case aright, he has brought against you the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Its Word condemns you; its threatenings strike you like barbed arrows. You turn to the law as it is here revealed, and it is altogether on a smoke against you. You turn to the promises, and even they wound you, because you feel you have no right to them. You look at the most precious passages, but they do not assuage your grief, but the rather increase it, because you cannot realize them and lay hold upon them for yourself. Now, this is God using his Word against you, and you know what a weapon that is,--"the sword of the Spirit, which is quick and powerful, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." They are cut deep that are wounded by the Word of God. If it were my words which had brought you into this fear, you might soon get rid of it; but these are God's words. Were it a father's curse, it might be hard to give you comfort; but it is God's curse that hath gone out against you--the curse of the God who made you. He himself bath told you that the sinner shall not stand in his sight, and that he hateth the workers of iniquity. He has himself brought home to your conscience some of those awful passages:--"God is angry with the wicked every day;" "He will by no means clear the guilty;" "Our God is a consuming fire;" "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." With such weapons as these; with red-hot shot fired against you with all the

power of the Spirit, it remains no longer a wonder that your soul should be sharply racked, and your very bones should wax old through your roaring all the day long.

Furthermore, there is another cause for this deep disease of conviction, namely, the foolishness of the patient. Physicians will tell you that they can heal one man vastly more quickly than another, even though the disease be precisely the came, and the same remedies be used; for there are some men who help the physician by the quietude of them spirits by the ease and resignation of their minds, their heart is and this gives "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones." But other men are fretful, disturbed, vexed, anxious, questioning this and questioning that; and then the remedies themselves cease to have their proper effect. It is even so with you; you are a foolish patient; you will not do that which would cure you, but you do that which aggravates your woe; you know that if you would cast yourselves upon Christ Jesus you would have peace of conscience at once; but instead of that, you are meddling with doctrines too high for you, trying to pry into mysteries which the angels have not known, and so you turn your dizzy brain, and thus help to make your heart yet more singularly sad. You know that you are trying still to work out a righteousness of your own, and this is making your wounds stinking and corrupt. You know, too, that you are looking more to your faith than you are to the object of your faith; you are looking more to what you feel than to what Christ felt; you spend more time in looking at your convictions than you do at Christ's vicarious sacrifice upon the cross. You are a foolish patient; you are doing that which aggravates your complaint. Oh that you were but wiser, and these terrors and these pangs might the sooner be over; you would not tarry so long in the prison if you would but use the means of escape, instead of seeking to dash your head against its

strong walls,--walls that will not move with all your ravings, but which will only break, and bruise, and wound you the more. You seek to file your fetters, and you rivet them; you seek to unbind them yourself, and you thrust them the deeper into your flesh; you grasp the hammer, and here is the fetter about your wrist; you think to snap it, but you send the iron through the flesh, and make it bleed; you make yourself worse by all your attempts to make yourself better, so that much of your sorrowful conviction is due to your own absurdity, your own ignorance and folly.

And, once more, I must give you another reason. There is no wonder that you are under great and terrible pain when under conviction, for it is a disease in which nothing can ever help you but that one remedy. All the joys of nature will never give you relief. I have heard of some vain man who once wore the gown of a clergyman, who was "visited by a poor creature under distress of mind, in the days of Whitfield;" he said to the penitent, "You have been among the Methodists." "I know I have," said he. "Then don't go among those fellows; they have made you mad." "But what am I to do to get rid of the distress of mind I now feel?" "Attend the theater," said he; "go off to balls; take to gaming and the like; and in that way you will soon dissipate your woe." But as he that poureth vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a sad heart; it is taking away a man's garment to make him warm; it is heaping snow upon his head to dissolve the frostbite, sending him back to draff and dung that he may stay his hunger therewith, thrusting him into the kennel that he may get rid of the stench that offends his nostrils. Nay, but if these be the true woundings of God, sinful pleasures will make you worse instead of better; and even the usual comforts of life will lose all power to console you. The words of the tenderest wife, the most loving husband, the mercies of Providence, the

blessings of home,--all these will be of no avail to you to cure this disease. There is one remedy for it; but none of these will so much as touch it. Quaint old Fuller uses language to this effect, when Adam had sinned, he became suddenly plunged in misery; the birds sang as sweetly, the flowers bloomed as brightly, and the air was as balmy, and Eden quite as blissful; but Adam was in misery; he had unparadised paradise. God had not said a word against him, and yet he went and hid himself under the trees of the garden to find a shelter there. There was nothing in the whole garden that could give Adam a moment's delight, because he was under a sense of sin. And so will it be with you. If you could be put in paradise, you would not be the happier. Now that God has convinced you of sin, there is only one cure for you, and that one cure you must have; for you may ramble the world round and you will never find another. You may try your best with all the pleasures and mercies of this life, but you would be in torment, even though you could be taken to heaven, unless this one remedy should appease your aching heart.

2. I have thus, I think, given you sufficient reasons for the great poignancy of your grief; but now, secondly, what are God's designs in thus plunging you deeply in the mire? He does not deal so with all his people; some he brings in a very gentle way to himself. Why, then, does he deal thus hardly with you? The answers to this question are these: there are some questions best unanswered; there are some dealings of God about which we have no right to ask a question. If he draws you to heaven, though it were through hell itself, you ought to be content. So long as you are but saved, however fearful the process, you ought not to murmur. But I may give you some reasons after all.

In the first place, it is because you were such a stony-hearted sinner,--so dead, so careless,--that nothing else ever would have

awakened you but this trumpet. It would have been of no use to bring out the gospel with its dulcet notes; it would have been of little service for David to play on his harp before you. You needed to be aroused, and therefore it is that God has hurled his thunderbolts at you one after another, and has been pleased to make heaven and earth shake before you that you might be made to tremble. You were so desperately set on mischief, so stolid, so indifferent, that if saved, God must save you in such a way, or else not at all.

And then again, the Lord knows that there is that in your heart which would take you back to your old sins, and so he is making them bitter to you; he is burning you, that you may be like the burnt child that dreads the fire; he is letting you see the disease in its full climax, that you may from henceforth avoid the company in which that disease was found; he has taught you the full evil of your heart, the full obnoxiousness of sin, in order that from this day forth you may become a more careful walker, and may the more zealously hate every false way.

Besides, it may possibly happen that he designs this out of love to your soul, to make you the more happy afterwards. He is filling your mouth with wormwood, and breaking your teeth with gravel-stone, that you may have a richer appreciation of the luscious flavour of the will of pardon when he pours it into your heart. It is making you feed on ashes--the serpent's meat--that when you come to eat children's meat--the bread of heaven--your joy may be multiplied sevenfold. I am one of those poor souls who for five years led a life of misery, and was almost driven to distraction; but I can heartily say, that one day of pardoned sin was a sufficient recompense for the whole five years of conviction. I have to bless God for every terror that ever seared me by night, and for every foreboding that alarmed me by day. It has made me happier ever since; for now, if there be a trouble weighing upon my

soul, I thank God it is not such a trouble as that which bowed me to the very earth, and made me creep like a very beast upon the ground by reason of heavy distress and affliction. I know I never can again suffer what I have suffered; I never can, except I be sent to hell, know more of agony than I have known; and now, that ease, that joy and peace in believing, that "no condemnation" which belongs to me as a child of God, is made doubly sweet and inexpressibly precious, by the recollection of my past days of sorrow and grief. Blessed be thou, O God, for ever, who by those black days, like a dreary wind hath made these summer days all the fairer and the sweeter! The shore is never so welcome as when you mount it with the foot of a shipwrecked mariner just escaped from the sea; food never so sweet as when you sit at the table after days of hunger; water never so refreshing as when you arrive at the end of a parched desert, and have known what it is to thirst.

And yet one other reason let me give you, and I need not keep you longer on this point. Possibly, God is bringing you thus, my dear friends, because he means to make great use of you. We are all God's weapons against the enemy. All his saints are used as instruments in the Holy War; but there are some whom God uses in the thickest part of the battle. They are his swords whom he wields in his hand, and strikes innumerable blows with them. These he anneals again, and again, and again. He is annealing you. He is making you meet to be a mighty one in his Israel by-and-bye. Oh! how sweetly you will able to talk to others like yourself, when you once get comfort; and oh! how much you will love him when he once puts away your sin! Will you not? Oh! I think I see you the first day after your sins are forgiven. Why you will be wanting to preach: I should not wonder if you will be going out into the streets, or hurrying to your old companions, and saying to them,

"My sins are washed away." Why there will be nothing too hard for you. The Lord gets his best soldiers out of the highlands of affliction. These are Highlanders that carry everything before them. They know the rivers of sin, they know the glens of grief, and now their sins are all washed away, they know the heights of self-consecration, and of pure devotion; they can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth them, the Christ who has forgiven them.

Do you not think I have just driven the nail home here? Do you not feel in your spirit, that if Jesus would forgive you, you would do everything for him? Oh! I know if I should give out that hymn--

"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace."

you would say, "Ah, that I will; if ever he forgives such a wretch as I am, and takes such a poor worm as me to his bosom, nothing shall be too hard for me. I will give him all in this life, and I will give and eternity of praise in the life to come."

3. But now I am impatient to come to the word of comfort which I have for you upon the great remedy. Sinners distressed on account of sin, and bowed with terror down, there is a way of salvation for thee, a way open and accessible,--accessible now. Thou mayest now have all thy griefs assuaged, and all thy sorrows may flee away. Hear thou then the remedy, and hear it as from the lip of God, and take care that thou availest thyself of it now, for the longer thou tarriest, the harder will it be to avail thyself of it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Dost understand me? Trust Christ and you are saved; trust him now and all your sins are gone; there is not one left. Past, present, and to come, all gone. "Am I to feel nothing?" No, not as a preparation for Christ; trust Jesus and thou art saved. "Are there

no good works required of me?" None, none; good works shall follow afterwards. The remedy is a simple one; not a compound mixture of thy things and Christ; it is just this--the blood of Jesus Christ. There is Jesus on his cross. His hands are bleeding; his heart is bursting; his limbs are tortured; the powers of his soul are full of agony. Those sufferings were offered to God in the place of our sufferings, and "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Believe on him now. "But I may not," says one. Thou mayest, nay, not only thou mayest, but thou art condemned if thou dost not believe him now. "I cannot," saith one. Canst not believe thy Lord? Is he a liar? Canst thou not believe his power to save? The Son of God in agony, and yet no power to save!! "I cannot think he shed his blood for me," saith such an one. Thou art commanded to trust him. Thou shalt read thy title clear in him afterwards. Thy business now is simply with him, not with thine interest in him. That shall be known afterwards. Trust him now and thou art saved. Faith is not believing that Christ died for me. If Christ died for every man, then every Arminian, saved or unsaved, hath the true faith: for he believes Christ died for every man. We as Calvinists, do not believe this, but we believe faith consists in trusting Christ, and whosoever trusts Christ shall know as the effect of that trust, that Jesus died for him, and he is saved. Trust Jesus now; just as thou art, fall flat on thy face before him. Away with that last dirty rag of thine--that last good work; away with that last filthiness--that last good thought; thy good thought, and thy good works are rags and filthiness. Come just as thou art; naked, lost, ruined, helpless, poor. If thou art so bad that I cannot describe thee, and thou canst not describe thyself, yet come. Mercy's free, mercy's free. I am never afraid of preaching grace too free, or a Christ too willing to save. You do want a Mediator to come to God with, but you

want none to come to Christ with. You do need some preparation if you are going to the Father; you want none if you are coming to the Son. Come as you are; and God himself must be untrue, his throne must have foundations apart from righteousness, Christ must be false, and this Bible a lie, before one soul that trusts Jesus can ever perish. There is the remedy, by the power of the Holy Spirit; avail thyself of it. Now God help thee and thou art fully saved.

II. I shall now want your patient attention for another five or ten minutes, while I take upon myself what was a double duty, because I was afraid to shout the last part of the sermon the first part might do hurt. In the last part of the sermon I have to deal with some WHO HAVE NEVER FELT THESE TERRORS AT ALL, AND WHO STRANGE TO SAY IT, WISH THEY HAD FELT THEM.

I suppose I may have conversed now with somewhere verging upon two thousand souls who have been brought to know the Lord under my instrumentality, and I have very often noticed that a considerable proportion of these, and of the best members of our Church too, were brought to know the Lord not by legal terrors, but by gentler means. Sitting one day last week, I saw some twenty-three, and I should think that there might be as many as twelve out of the twenty-three whose convictions of sin were not distinctly marked with the terrors of the law. An excellent young woman comes before me--"What was the first thought that set you really seeking the Savior?" "Sir, it was Christ's lovely character that first made me long to be his disciple. I saw how kind, how good, how disinterested, how self-sacrificing he was, and that made me feel how different I was to what he was. I thought Oh! I am not like Jesus!' and that sent me up to my chamber, and I began to pray! I often have cases like this--I preach a terrible sermon upon the law, and I find sinners get comfort under it; I preach another sermon

upon Election, and I find poor sinners get awakened under it. God blesses the Word in the very opposite manner to which I thought it would be blessed, and he brings very, very many, to know their state by nature by things which we should have thought would rather have comforted than alarmed them. "The first religious impression I ever had," said another, "that set me seeking the Savior, was this; a young companion of mine fell into sin, and I knew that I was likely to do the same if I was not kept by some one stronger than myself; I therefore sought the Lord, not on account of past sin at first, but because I was afraid of some great future sin. God visited me, and I then felt conviction of sin and was brought to Christ." Singularly enough too I have met with at least a score of persons who found Christ and then mourned their sins more afterwards than they did before. Their convictions have been more terrible after they have known their interest in Christ than they were at first. They have seen the evil after they have escaped from it; they had been-plucked out of the miry clay, and their feet set on a rock, and then afterwards they have seen more fully the depth of that horrible pit out of which they have been snatched, So that it is not true that all who are saved suffer these convictions and terrors. There are a considerable number who are drawn by the cords of love and the bands of a man. There are some who, like Lydia, have their hearts opened not by the crowbar of conviction, but by the pick-lock of divine grace. Sweetly drawn, almost silently enchanted by the loveliness of Jesus, they say, "Draw me, and I will run after thee."

And now you ask me the question--"Why has God brought me to himself in this gentle manner? "Again I say--there are some questions better unanswered than answered. God knows best the reason why he does not give you these terrors; leave that question with him. But I may tell

you an anecdote. There was a man once who had never felt these terrors and he thought within himself--"I never can believe I am a Christian unless I do." so he prayed to God that he might feel them, and he did feel them, and what do you think is his testimony? He says, "Never, never do that, for the result was fearful in the extreme." If he had but known what he was asking for, he would not have asked for anything so foolish. I knew a Christian man once who prayed for trouble. He was afraid he was not a Christian, because he had no trouble; but when the trouble came, he soon discovered how foolish he was to be asking for a thing which God in mercy had kept back from him. O be not foolish enough to sigh for misery. Thank God that you go to heaven along the walls of salvation; bless the Master that he does not call you in the cloudy and dark day, but brings you gently to himself; and be content, I pray you, to be called by the music of the voice of love.

May it not happen that Jesus Christ has thus brought you for another reason? He knew that you were very weak, and your mind was very frail, and if you had felt these terrors you might have gone mad; and you might have been in a lunatic asylum now instead, if you had passed through them. It is true his grace could have kept you, but God always tempers the willed to the shorn lamb, and he will not treat the weak ones as he does the strong ones.

And I think again, it may be that if God had given you these feelings you would have grown self-righteous. You would have trusted in them, so he has not given you them. You have not got them to build on, thank God for that, for now you must build on Christ. You say--"If I had felt these things, I think I should have been saved." Yes, then you would have trusted in your feelings; the Lord knew that, and therefore he has not given you them. He has given you nothing at all, therefore you must now rest on Christ and nowhere else but there. Oh! do so now.

It may be, again, that he has kept you there because he means to make you needful--useful to some who like yourself have come gradually to him, for you can say to them when you find them in distress, "Why Jesus Christ brought me gently, and therefore be of good cheer, he is bringing you too." I always like to see in my church some of all sorts. Now there is a brother I could point out this morning who has never known in his life, and I think never will know, about the plague of his own heart, to such an extent as some of us have learnt. He has never gone through fire and through water, but on the contrary is a loving-hearted spirit; a man who spends and is spent in his Master's service, he knows more of the heights of communion than some of us. For my part--though I do not want to change places with anybody--I think I could trust my Master if I had his experience, as well as I can trust him with my own. For what has experience to do with it after all? We do not rest on experiences, and frames, and doings;

"Our hopes are fixed on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness."

Now to you then, in conclusion, I preach the same remedy. Poor soul, thou longest to be troubled; ay! but I'd rather have thee long to get relief. Jesus Christ hangs on the cross, and if thou wilt trust him, thou shalt be saved. Just as thou art, as I said to my other friend just now--Just as thou art, take Christ as he is. Now, never think about getting ready for Christ; he does not want anything of yours. You need not trim and dress yourselves to come to Christ. Even your frames and feelings are not the wedding garment. Come naked. "But sir, I am so careless."--come careless, then. "But I am so hardhearted."--come hard-hearted, then. "But I am so thoughtless."--come thoughtless, then, and trust Christ now. If you trust him, you will not trust a deceiver. You will not have put your soul into the hand of one who will let it

fall and perish. ' Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," whether convicted by terror or by love, for "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not" feel what he may, and be in terror though he may, "shall be damned."

Chapter 27

Peace at Home, and Prosperity Abroad

A Sermon

(No. 314)

Delivered on Wednesday Evening, May 9th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At The Tabernacle, Moorfields,

ON BEHALF OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

"He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly."--Psalm 147:14.-15.

PARDON ME, MY BRETHREN, if I attempt no exposition whatever of the text, but simply endeavor to address you upon what I think is an inference from it, or at least a reflection to which it might readily give rise. The Psalmist is here describing the prosperity of Jerusalem, and he connects that prosperity with the progress and diffusion of the Word of God. He is teaching us I think just this great truth, that there is an intimate connection between the establishment and the building of our Zion at home, and the going forth and the spread of God's Word abroad, both in the provinces of our own land, and throughout the regions of the world. Our own churches must be in a prosperous state. AS the second verse hath it--"the Lord doth build up Jerusalem," we may then rest assured that "he will gather together the outcasts of Israel." If there be in the churches of our own highly-favored land a healthiness of spirit and an abundance of the grace of God, we need not fear but that all our operations will be carried on with success. God shall greatly crown our endeavors, and give us to see our heart's desire. If this be not precisely the

critical meaning of the text, then let me just say I shall use it in this sense as a motto. The subject of this evening's discourse will be the connection between a healthy church at home, and the increase of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, let me very briefly advert to the main points which constitute a healthy state in the Church of Christ. Under what conditions should we be warranted in applying to it the glowing description of this Psalm--"He hath blessed thy children within thee; he maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of wheat." When we have described this healthiness, we shall proceed to show the connection between this and the sending forth of God's comrnandment upon earth--the running swiftly of his word; and then we shall conclude by pushing this principle home to the necessary inference.

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME?

To begin with the most important--the true piety of an her members. A Church can never be in a sound and satisfactory state for labor, she never can be in such a. condition that God can smile upon her complacently, if she be mixed up with the world, if her sons and daughters be not sufficiently distinguished from the world to be manifestly God's people. if we take into our churches those who are not converted, we swell our numbers, but we diminish our real strength. We might need to purchase a larger church-book, we might, perhaps, be able to parade our numbers before the world, and we might even flatter ourselves with our apparent prosperity till we intoxicated our own brain, but we should be going backward when we think we are going forward. We have not conquered the world; we have only yielded to it. We have not brought the world up to us, we have only brought ourselves down to it. We have not Christianized an ungodly generation, but we

have adulterated Christianity. We have brought the chaste spouse of Christ to commit fornication among the people. We cannot possibly be too strict in the examination of those who are proposed for church fellowship. I will grant you, there are methods by which bigotry may exclude a large proportion of those whom God has called, putting such an extent of knowledge as the test of Christian experience, that many of the lambs of the flock stand bleating without the fold, and are never enabled to come and partake of its pasturage. This evil, doubtless, is to be avoided. But on the other hand, it is quite possible that the fullest charity with which the mildness of our Savior's mind and the love of the Spirit can imbue us, may be blended with the sternest firmness in executing a sacred trust, and with the most prudent discretion in maintaining the purity of discipleship, when we are engaged in the acceptance or rejection of candidates for the fellowship of the visible Church. If we could to-morrow bring into the Church a sufficient number of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, to double our subscriptions, to double our places of worship, to enable us to double the number of our missionaries, we should by succumbing to the temptation procure a curse instead of a blessing. In our purity, and in our purity alone we stand. Let us once lose our distinctive principles, let us once come back and attempt to nationalize the Church, and bring ourselves from the distinction we have sought to maintain between the Church and the world, and God's blessing will be withdrawn from us; we shall cease to be strong within, and mighty without. Oh I that God might grant to each of us, who are the pastors of the Church, that unceasing vigilance and constant watchfulness whereby we shall be able to detect the wolves in sheep's clothing, and whereby we shall be able to say calmly, sternly, yet lovingly, to those who come before us seeking communion, without

satisfactory evident that they belong to the living family of God, "You must go your way until the Spirit of God hath touched your heart, for until you have received the living faith in Jesus, we cannot receive you into the number of his faithful ones."

Next to the sincere piety of all our Church members, I think we must look very carefully and very steadfastly to the soundness of that gospel which we proclaim and preach. Soundness I say--and here possibly I may be touching upon a delicate subject, but what signifieth if that subject be of the utmost and highest importance 1 There should be, I aver, in the declaration of the ministers of Christ, not uniformity, for that is not consistent with life, but unity which is not only consistent with life, but which is one of the highest marks of a healthy existence. I do not think the time will ever come when we shall all of us see eye to eye, and shall all use the same terms and phrases in setting forth doctrinal truths. I do not imagine there ever will be a period, unless it should be in that long-looked for millennium, when every brother thou be able to subscribe to every other brother's creed; when we shall be identical in our apprehensions, experiences, and expositions of the gospel in the fullest sense of the word. But I do maintain there should be, and there must be if our churches are to be healthy and sound, a constant adherence to the fundamental doctrines of divine truth. I should be prepared to go a very long way for charity's sake, and admit that very much of the discussion which has existed even between Arminians and Calvinists has not been a discussion about vital truth, but about the terms in which that vital truth shall be stated.

When I have read the conflict between that mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice. Mr. Whitfield, and that other mighty man equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same truths, and that the vitality of Godliness was not mainly

at issue in the controversy. But, my brethren, if it should ever come to be a matter which casts doubts upon the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, if it should come to a matter of using gospel terms in a sense the most contrary to that which has ever been attached to them in any age of the truth; if it should ever come to the marring and spoiling of our ideas of Divine justice, and of that great atonement which is the basis of the whole gospel, as they have been delivered to us; then it is time my brethren once for all that the scabbard be thrown aside, that the sword be drawn. Against any who assails those precious vital truths which constitute the heart of our holy religion, we must contend even to the death. It is not possible that an affirmative and negative can be two views of the same truth. We are continually told when one man contradicts another, that he does but see with other eyes. Nay, my brethren, the one man is blind, he does not see at all, the other sees, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened. There may be two views of truth, but two views of truth cannot be directly antagonistic. One must be the true view and the other the false view. No stretch of my imagination can ever allow me to anticipate the time can come when "yes" and "no" can lie comfortably down in the same bed. I cannot conceive by any means there ever can be a matrimonial alliance between positive and negative. Think ye such things might exist! Verily there were giants at one time, when the sons of God saw the daughters of men; and we may live to see gigantic heresies, when God's own children may look upon the fair daughters of philosophy, and monster delusions shall stalk across the earth. A want of union about truth too clearly proves that the body of the Church is not in a healthy state. No man's system can be said to be in a normal condition if that man prefers ashes to bread, and prefers ditch water to that which flows from the bubbling fountain. A man must be unhealthy

or he would not use such garbage. We must look to the preservation of the health of the Church. Alas! if her doctrines be tainted, her faith will not be maintained, and the Church being unsound, can tell what next may occur.

But not to tarry longer here, it seems to me the next important point with regard to the true healthiness of the Church at home, will be more and more of the spirit of union. This Society happily represents in a large degree this saved bond of brotherhood. It may have become somewhat denominational, it was never intended to be; nor is it the fault of the maintainers, it is not because they have made it exclusive but because other denominations have. somewhat seceded, and established societies of their own. The London Missionary Society comprehended all Christian men, whether in the Establishment or not. I believe we are an eligible to become members, and all may, as far as we can, assist m sending forward the gospel by its means. But alas I there lingers amongst our Churches--and I hope it is but a lingering of that which must presently expire--there lingers still a spirit of disunion, because we do not agree in ceremonies. We must needs have livers communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless we are really and vitally one. We must have I suppose different walks, and cannot commune and converse with one another as members of the same family, and as parts of the same divine body. Whenever the foot is at enmity with the hand there must be something like madness in the body; there cannot be a sound mind within that frame which is divided against itself. And if there be among us any remnants of the spirit of division; if there be aught in us that would make us excommunicate and cut off brethren, because we cannot see with them in all the points of the spiritual compass, though we agree in the main; if it be so, then there must be somewhere or other an unhealthy

disease, there must be grey hairs here and there, which have stolen upon us though we knew it not. Oh my heart longs to see a more thorough union among the ministers of Christ Jesus. I think there is more of it than we sometimes believe. I am sure the more we come to know one another, the better we love each other. Distrust may arise from want of personal acquaintance; we need more frequently to come into company; and if the Churches were more active, so as to throw us into contact, I think we should discover more of a real unity than perhaps we think has began to exist. And oh I that this unity may grow and continue, and may not be merely an evangelical alliance in form, but a spiritual confederation in fact; that its enunciation may come from every lip and every heart, and that there may be a real love toward every other member of that alliance, in carrying out its principles to the fullest and the greatest extent.

These three points--purity of life, soundness of doctrine, and unity of the ministers of the Church of Christ--will help to constitute a healthy Church at home. All these things, however, will never avail unless there be added another, namely, constant activity. We all have our times when we feel dull, and listless, and heavy, when we would rather be in bed all day than get up, rather sit in the chair than go to business or enter the pulpit; or when we are in the pulpit, we find our brain does not work, and we cannot put forth the energy that we would. The tongue may be as a ready writer, but we cannot speak as we would desire. We feel at times that we are not well, that there is something wrong in our system. And the Church every now and then gets into the same state. At intervals some earnest speech stirs the members up to spasmodic action, then they return again to their apathy and Laodicean lukewarmness. Sometimes they feel as if they would carry all by storm, but anon they sit down again in calm security. We have

hundreds of our churches, from which I continually receive an answer like this to the enquiry, "How do you prosper?"--"Well, we are not increasing much, we have added no souls to the Church, but we are very comfortable." That very comfortableness has stolen upon a large proportion of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a marvel that they should be comfortable while souls are dying, and sinners perishing; when hell is filling, and the kingdom of Christ is not extending. But yet quite comfortable they are; and they come to look upon the revivals and increase to the Church as wonders and prodigies, rather like comets that come now and then, than like sums which are to abide with us; and they grow into the habit of questioning the revival spirit, and thinking that when the Church is alive, she has become excited, that she has been dram drinking. and is intoxicated, instead of behaving that it is just her actual evidence of health. When she is in health she is at work without her hands, praying with an her tongues, weeping with an her eyes, and agonizing with God in prayer with all the might of her many intercessors. Oh, my brethren, we are an wrong when we think that the Church is healthy when it is comfortable and still. Is the health of the stagnant pool, the health of the grave-yard, the health of a fainting fit--a fit that is on the very verge of death. God be pleased to let loose some blood from we, that we may discover what the Church really is when she shall put forth all her energy. If we saw a queen sitting upon a heap of rubbish, her hair disheveled, and dirt upon her garments, if she never stirs hand or foot, but sits down sleeping on in her misery, could you think she is a queen in all her dignity? Rise up thou Virgin Daughter of Zion, and let us behold thee in thy beauty; shake thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments, and ascend to thy throne--then shall men see what thou art. When thou art idle, and careless, and prayerless, thou

art sick and ready to die, but when thou art anxious, and striving, and travailing, then art thou in the state in which thy Lord would have thee; thou dost bless him and he hath blessed thee.

One more point, and I will conclude this description of the Church's healthiness. The Church is never healthy except when she abounds in prayer. I have known prayer meetings that have been like the bells to the parish steeple--a very poor parish where there were never enough bells to ring a chime. The minister has had to pray twice and read a long chapter, in order to spin out the time, or to meet the want yet more efficiently, he has caned upon a brother who had the gift of supplicating for twenty-five minutes, and then concluded by asking pardon for his short comings. And then the few friends, the bold-hearted, self-denying martyrs, who went to hear the Word of God, were obliged to endure the torture of hearing such a prayer as that. Those brethren must come and go, and never feel that God has been in their midst, that they have never been near to the throne of God, never had the wrestling with the angel, never brought a blessing down, for the man has been praying against time, "an occupying of the few minuted, as they call it, and there was no real intercession or drawing near to God. Now, what Church can be considered to be as Christ would have her, when her members meet to pray, and they constitute but a handful? I care not if the place is crowded at your other services, the Church is not prosperous if the prayer-meetings be thin. It signifies nothing if that Church has sent up a hundred, or five hundred, or a thousand pounds to the Missionary Society--write "Ichabod" on her walls, unless the brethren meet together for prayer. The most erudite minister may instruct the people; the most earnest preacher may plead God's cause with men, but if he bath not with him a band of men who plead man's cause with God, his pleadings will be in vain. Shut up that

house in which men have ceased to pray; or if you open it, let your opening be a meeting for hearty and earnest prayer. I have to mourn and confess in my own case, that I have had to feel in myself--and I think I can speak for many others--a want of prayerfulness with regard to missionary effort especially. These things do not meet us as the destitution of London does; for the City Missionaries, and for the sinners of our own congregations, I trust we do not need arguments to make us pray. These arguments are before us every day. We do pray for our own families, and our own congregations, but the heathens are across the sea, many miles away. We may now and then see a Master in the street, or the dark face of a Hindoo, and then our soul breathes a silent ejaculation; but alas! for the most part, many Christians might say whole months pass with them without carrying the cause of the heathen, who are in darkness, before the throne of God; and how can we expect, while this unhealthiness exists among us, that God will bless our missionary operations. Zion must avail before she can bring forth children. She may use all her weapons but if she keep back the great battering-ram of prayer, she will never break the walls of the spiritual Jericho. She may use every other instrument, but unless she takes John Bunyan's weapon of "all-prayer," she will never put to rout the great enemy of souls. Yes, my brethren, we want faithfulness, we want healthiness, we want a prayerful spirit given to us, then we may conclude that all is well with us.

It shall be left to each individual heart, and each member of the Church, to answer for himself the question, whether his own Church is in a state of spiritual health, taking these things as a test; namely, purity, soundness, unity, and prayerfulness.

II. I have now to show THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY CHURCH AT HOME AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM ABROAD.

To the mind of the simple this thing will be clear enough. Suppose all the Churches to degenerate into a lack of life, and into nearness to spiritual death. Suppose the pulpit in our land gives an uncertain sound. As a result God's people begin to forsake the assembling of themselves together, no crowds gather to hear the Word; places begin to get empty prayer-meetings become more and more deserted; the efforts of the Church may be still carried on, but they are merely a matter of routine; there is no life, no heart in it. I am supposing a case you see, a case which I trust we never may see. Things get worse and worse; the doctrines of the gospel become expunged and unknown; they that fear the Lord no more speak one to another. Still for a little time the money continues to be brought into the Society, and foreign missions are sustained. Can you not imagine reading in the next report, "We have had no converts this year; our income is still maintained; but notwithstanding that, our brethren feel that they are laboring under the greatest possible disadvantages; in fact, some of them wish to return home and renounce the work." Another year--the missionary spirit has grown cold in the Churches, in funds decrease. Another year, and yet another, it becomes a moot point among us as to whether missions are necessary or not. We have come at last to the more advanced point which some. have already reached, and begin to question whether Mahomet and Confucius had not a revelation from God as well as Jesus Christ. And now we begin to say, "Is it needful that we should extend the gospel abroad at all? We have lost faith in it; we see it does nothing at home, shall we send that across the sea which is a drug on the market here, and distribute as a healing for the wounds of the daughters of Zidon and of Tyre that which bath not healed the daughter of Jerusalem?" I can conceive that first one station then another would be given up, those that would be maintained would only be kept up by

reason of an old custom which was recollected to have existed in the absurd days of Evangelists. I can imagine the Church degenerating further, and further, and further, till at last her unhealthiness clearly showed that it would be impossible that it ever could be maintained abroad. You have only to look abroad upon nature, and you will soon find analogies to this. There is a well of water springing up, and the people of the district flock to it, it is said to have healthy properties; men come and dome thereat and are refreshed. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail; by some means or other the water is removed to another place, and the spring is no more there. You can conceive that this place would cease to be a thoroughfare; there would no longer be passengers. Where multitudes of men and women were wont to drink with joy and gladness, there is not a single person to be seen. Or, suppose again, there is the sun in its sphere shedding light on all the planets, and with its attractive power making them move with regularity in their orbits Suddenly the sun's fire dies out; its attractive power decreases also, and becomes extinguished. Can you not imagine that the result must be fatal to all the planets that revolve around it I How shall they be sustained in their light and heat, or how shall they be kept in their spheres when once the power that kept them there is gone? No, prophecy is fulfilled; the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree.

And what is the Church to our missionary stations but like the sun? Is it not her light that shines? Do they not receive from her their instructions in the Word of God--the light of the world? And are not; those stations the rays from the great central luminary? Let her lose her power and her light, and what must become of the rest of the world? Must not total blank darkness cover all the nations? Oh I yes, my

brethren, if we do not know that, we soon should know it if God should ever put us to the test. If once England's glory were extinguished, if once the Christianity of America were put out, where were all the vital godliness then? How should those agencies which depend upon us! be sustained if our home piety were once brought to nought? No; we must have the bars of our gates strengthened, there must be peace in our borders, and we must. be filled with the finest wheat, or else God s Word will not run very quickly, nor will his commandment be sent faith upon the earth.

Let me endeavor very briefly to shows what this connection is. There is a direct connection between the primeness of the Church at hone and the progress of Christianity abroad--a direct connection; we shall have to speak of the more indirect connection by-and-bye. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christ's kingdom in other lands. An excellent minister of the Church in France told me--and told it with a sorrowful earnestness too--that Protestantisin received a severe check in Paris from the inconsistent conduct of Christian men there, those who protested Protestantisin at least, if they were not members of our Churches. "Now sir," said he, "when a man visits Paris, who is a Protestant--an English Protestant--I will not say is an actual member of your Church certainly,--when he comes to Paris, he neglects all attendance to the Sabbath-day;" and Romanists, if spoken to about their constant breach of the holy day, will reply to the Reformed Christians of France, "Look to the Protestants of Great Britain when they are here; do they attend to their religion abroad any better than we do?"

I have been assured by several pastors living in Paris, that it is a frightful and lamentable fact, that men when they go on the Continent seem to go there to get rid of their religion, when they land on those

shores they assume the garb of a traveler, and think they may be permitted to attend Roman Catholic places of worship on the Lord's day, and they are not seen worshipping God with their brethren where the worship in the English language is still maintained. I can assure you that I was affectionately requested to avail myself of an early opportunity to make a prominent complaint against the Christianity of England for its inconsistency abroad. In the name of the pastors of France I speak, and in the name of the pastors of l'Oratoire I think I speak it also--I think I speak for five of them at least--I do beseech of Christian men who are going abroad, not to permit themselves to forget their Christianity, but to remember that the eyes of men are still upon them, and if not the eyes of men certainly the eyes of God. Let me give you another fact, which proves that when the Church is unsound home she will not go on well abroad. In the late Report of the Baptist Missionary Society J observed a great trouble through which certain stations have lately passed; a trouble which they have survived, but which materially checked their usefulness Certain brethren holding rather extreme Church views thought it necessary, instead of carrying on operations among the pure heathen, to set to work to convert those who were Christians already to their own creed, and the effect in the villages where they tried their scheme was, that by dint of giving more charity than a poorer society could afford to give, they managed to decoy a large proportion of the congregations to a different form of Protestant service. The result was just this--they were informed by these pastors--good men doubtless--that the sect to which they once belonged was an ignoble body in its own country, and did not possess any influence. And for the first time the Hindoos answered that there were Christian men who could depreciate one another--that there were professors of this one religion who had a

greater dislike to one another than any two sects of Heathenism ever had. The effect upon the minds of the villagers was not merely disastrous to that one mission, but to Christianity herself. They began to suspect that the house that was divided against itself could not have its foundations upon truth.

My brethren, when we shall once come to unity of doctrine, and to purity and consistency of life, the direct agency of our Church members, and of our missionaries upon the heathen world, will be far more healthy and effective than it is. I do not doubt, if I had a wider and more extensive knowledge of the proceedings of the Church in other lands, I could multiply instances of this kind, in which our faults at home have been very great draw-backs upon our success abroad. And yet the agency, I think, may be considered in the main to be indirect; but nevertheless, as potent as if it were direct. If our Churches be not true, if they be not kept by God, if they be not pure and holy, and prayerful, they will begin to lose the missionary spirit, and when the missionary spirit evaporates, of what use will be the missionary body? Bury it; yes, in Bloomfield Street will we dig its grave, or in Moorgate Street shall we make a vault I Put on its shroud, and let it have a tearful burial, for if the spirit of missions be lost in the Churches, it would be no use trying to maintain the semblance of the body of the Society. We all know what the missionary spirit is, and yet we could not any of us exactly describe it. It is a sort of thing that sets a man longing to see others saved, and makes him pant especially for those who have no means of grace in their own lands, that they may have those means carried to them, that they may be saved. This leads them to self-denying, and to earnest prayer for those that are diligent servants. Extinguish the healthiness of the Church, and you have lost that spirit. We can never expect the ruddy flush of

health upon the cheek, unless there is health within. The missionary spirit is just that bloom, which will soon be taken away if consumption should seize upon the frame. The missionary spirit can only be maintained by the maintenance of life and vitality in the Church. But further, if you take away the missionary spirit; of course all prayerfulness, and with that an powerful. ness to rend the clouds of heaven is withdrawn. Let the winds of the Holy Spirit, brethren, once depart from our Churches at home, our Missionary Society shall be as a ship at sea with her sails an spread, and her spars well rigged, but without a breath of air to move her towards her port. There she shall lie till she perishes upon the rocks, or founders in a calm. She can be of no service; she can bring no glory to her God, carry no cargo of living spirits up to the port of heaven, unless there be prayer at home to wake up all the winds, and let them loose upon her to speed her on her destined course. With that want of prayer too, you must remember you suspend all hopes of finding fresh missionaries. I have often wondered whether our Churches are choosing the best means to find out young men who would be useful in the mission field. There is growing now-a-days a lack of ministers for our own pulpits. Why it is so I cannot tell, except that it strikes me, that young men are not sufficiently encouraged when they have preaching abilities, to endeavor to do their best to exercise them. I do know a brother who ever makes it a rule, if a young man displays any sort of ability, and applies to him for a recommendation for College or otherwise,--positively to throttle him if he can. "You," he says. "Who are you? I am sure you will never make a minister, you can only talk, sir--you are no good." And many a young man who might have been usefully employed in that one Church has been driven away from it to seek some more congenial spirit, because he has been put back in his attempts to do some service. Of

course if we never make an attempt to grow ministers, or to bring them out from the world, train them up and guide them to the place where their talents may be proved, we shall not have a right to expect God's blessing in this matter. Only cease to cultivate wheat, and you shall have but very little of it. God does raise men and send them out; but at time he works by means. And he makes the Church use means to bring out members. The old Church of the Waldenses used the best means I think that ever will be devised. Every pastor of the Church had one young man with him, and tried to train him up, keeping him in habitual conversation with him, and teaching him what he knew of pastoral discipline and of the preaching of the Word. So that when the one minister died, they had not to look for a successor, there he was ready to hand among the young men who had come out of that Church. Our nation used to boast that it could grow everything it needed; we do not care for the boast in these free-trade times, but we do say that our Churches ought to grow All that they need for themselves. They ought not always to go a hundred miles to get pastors when they could obtain them amongst themselves. They do not-go abroad for deacons! Why not have pastors from among themselves that were raised from childhood in the Church? Ah! should we once become unsound in our Churches, and prayer become cold, and where are the men to come from that shall succeed those heroes of Christ whose blood was shed by heathen hands? Where shall we find the successors to Knuibb and Williams? Where shall we find the successors to Moffat and Livingstone, unless the healthy tone of Christian self-denial and holy firmness of divine fervor be kept up and maintained? Do you imagine you can enlist them from abroad? Do you think they will spring up at your can? Oh, no. It is one thing to obtain money to keep a man, to obtain a free passage for him, and a station where he may be maintained; but another thing to find your man.

And you may lose your men because you are not looking for them; you may pass over the men whom God would honor most, because they come not up to your standard of scholastic attainments or oratorical gift. They might come up to that by-and-bye. You striving together with prayer, with sympathy and interest in their welfare, God would enrich them, and you might find a phalanx of heroes who should be like the old guard, who never could surrender, but in every battle upon which they should enter would drive their foemen before them, even to the ends of the earth.

III. The last point is one upon which I would briefly but very earnestly preach to myself and to all here assembled. If it be true, and I am sure it is, that the healthiness of the Church at home is vitally connected with the success of the Word of God as preached abroad, then, dear brothers and sisters, let us remember that it must have also a connection with our own personal standing in the sight of God. Truth is like the crystal, which retains its shape even though it be broken almost to an invisible atom. And so the truth that our success depends upon the whole Church is equally sure, when we bring it down to this, that our success in a measure depends upon the vitality, healthiness, and Godliness of each individual If you were as a Christian, my brother, a separate and distinct organism--a body entirely separate from every one else--you, might be never so sick and no one else would suffer; but you are not so. Remember that you are a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and we hold it to be a precious fact, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer; that, if one member rejoice, ad the members share the joy. Must it not equally be true, that if one member be unhealthy, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole? The Church had all things common in the Apostles' days in temporals; to this day she has all

things common in spirituals. We all draw from the same treasury; on the other hand we ought to contribute to the same. If you contribute less, there is the less in the treasury; if your efforts be more feeble than they should be, the efforts of the whole Church are the feebler. Depend upon it, if there be no electric unions between man and man, there are such spiritual unions that the thoughts, acts, and words of any one man do in a degree, however inappreciable to our senses, affect the deeds and actions of every living man, and perhaps of every man that ever shall live to the end of this earthly dispensation. There is no end to a word, it is an infinite thing. It is like the stone that is dropped into the lake--the circles are ever-widening. So your influence for good or evil knows no bound. It may be but little upon one individual, but then that individual prolongs it upon another, and he upon another still, till the pulse of time, nay of eternity, may be made to throb through something that you have said or done. You may work an evil work which shall tremble in the flames of hell for ever and ever, or you may do a good work, which under God may glisten in the light of glory throughout eternity. There is no limit to the influence of any man, and certainly there is no possibility of your staying that influence altogether, and of making yourself so distinct that you are independent of another.

Look then ye cold, ye careless ones, look ye on this--ye are not clear, ye have helped to spoil the Church. Next time ye go abroad to find fault, remember that you share in the cause of that fault. Next time you mourn the Church's prayerlessness, remember that it is your own prayerlessness that helps to make up the bulk of the Church's lack. Next time you would complain of any minister's dullness, or of any Church s want of energy, oh! reflect, it is your own dullness, your own want of energy, that helps to swell the rolling tide. If every man

mended one, all would be mended if every man had but one soul stirred, and that soul his own, the whole Church would be stirred up. If it were possible for every member of the Church to be sound how could any part of the body be sick? If every individual were what he should be, Low could there be any complaints? We have grown into the habit of praying for the Church as if she were a colossal culprit, which we should tie up, and then take the ten-thonged whip of the law and pull off thongful after thongful of the quivering flesh, while all the while the real culprit is escaping, namely--ourselves--our own individual selves. I do feel more and more the necessity of looking at the souls of men in the light of my own responsibility to them. I do not want to look at the maps sometimes published by the Society, with red and green marks, showing where there is light. I like to look at, and have a map where I have been a light. I would rather look at London, not in the light of what any particular society or its agency can do for it, but in the light of what I can do for it; and so each of you ought to look on his fellow-man. No society ever thought of taking your responsibility on itself; if it did so, or if you ever thought you have been both mistaken. Responsibilities to God for the souls of men is east on each one of us, and no contribution, however liberal, can ever shield us from the obligation. We must stand, each man for himself, and hear the "Well done good and faithful servant," or else "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

My dear Christian friends--members of our Churches--are you doing all you can for the souls of men. You cannot save them, but God the Holy Spirit can make you the instruments of their salvation. When you hear the bell tolling to-morrow for some one who lived in your street, can you go into the cemetery, and can you stand there and look at the grave and say, "I did all that was in the power of any mortal man for that

man's salvation" No, you cannot. I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, could say, when we hear of the death of friends, "If that man perish, I did not leave a single stone unturned." No, we might say we have done something, but we could not say that we have done all that we might have done.

And to conclude,--that I may discharge this solemn responsibility myself in some measure,--are there not many in this congregation who are still unconverted? We talk about heathens--there are heathens here. You have heard the name of Jesus these many years, but you are no more Christian tonight than the Hottentot in his kraal; perhaps further off from the kingdom of heaven than he, because you have become more hardened in heart by rejecting the gospel of Christ,--a sin he has never committed, seeing his bath never known it. Ah! my hearers, in this place there have been hundreds of souls brought to Jesus. There is not a pew in this ancient Tabernacle which could not tell stories of grace. If it could but speak, it would say, "Such-and-such a broken-hearted penitent sat there." These walls, if they could cry aloud, could tell how many sighs and groans they have heard, and how many precious tears they have seen trickling from the eyes of converted men and women. And is there not one here to night who shall yet be saved? Remember, you are lost and ruined; ruined utterly, helplessly, and hopelessly. So far as you yourself ale concerned, there is no hope of your salvation. But there is help laid on One that is mighty to save even Jesus Christ. Look out of yourself to him, and you are saved. Cast away ail self-confidence and repose on Jesus and your spirit lives. The soul-quickening words are "Believe and live." Oh! may the Lord enable you now to trust Jesus and you shall be saved, be your sins never so many. The hour which sees you look to Christ, sees sin's black garment all unbound and cast away. The hour which sees your eye salute the

bleeding Savior, sees the eye of God looking down on you with manifest complacency and joy. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved," be his sins never so many; "he that believeth not shall be damned," be his sins never so few. I would earnestly exhort those who feel their need of Jesus, those who are "weary and heavy-laden, lost and ruined by the fall," now to take the Savior, even now, for he is yours. You have a personal right to him, so surely as your hearts are willing to receive him, you have nothing of your own Christ is yours, take him, his grace is free as the air. Take of this water of life which saves. Drink of it, no one can deny you, drink even to the full, and there shall be joy in heaven, and joy on earth over sinners saved. May the Lord add his blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 28

The Teaching of the Holy Ghost

A Sermon

(No. 315)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 13th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, Whatsoever I have said unto you."--John 14:26.

THERE ARE MANY CHOICE GIFTS comprehended in the Covenant of Grace, but the first and richest of them are these twain--the gift of Jesus Christ for us and the gift of the Holy Ghost to us. The first of these I trust we are not likely to undervalue. We delight to hear of that "unspeakable gift"--the Son of God, who bare our sine, and carried our sorrows, and endured our punishment in his own body on the tree. There is something so tangible in the cross, the nails, the vinegar, the spear, that we are not able to forget the Master, especially when so often we enjoy the delightful privilege of assembling round his table, and breaking bread in remembrance of him. But the second great gift, by no means inferior to the first--the gift of the Holy Spirit to us--is so spiritual and we are so carnal, is so mysterious and we are so material, that we are very apt to forget its value, ay, and even to forget the gift altogether. And yet, my brethren, let us ever remember that Christ on the cross is of no value to us apart from the Holy Spirit in us. In vain that blood is flowing, unless the finger of the Spirit applies the blood to our conscience; in vain is that garment of righteousness wrought out, a garment without seam, woven from the top

throughout, unless the Holy Spirit wraps it around us, and arrays us in its costly folds. The river of the water of life cannot quench our thirst till the Spirit presents the goblet and lifts it to our lip. All the things that are in the paradise of God itself could never be blissful to us so long as we are dead souls, and dead souls we are until that heavenly wind comes from the four corners of the earth and breathes upon us slain, that we may live. We do not hesitate to say, that we owe as much to God the Holy Ghost as we do to God the Son. Indeed, it were a high sin and misdemeanor to attempt to put one person of the Divine Trinity before another. Thou, O Father, art the source of all grace, all love and mercy towards us. Thou, O Son, art the channel of thy Father's mercy, and without thee thy Father's love could never flow to us. And thou, O Spirit--thou art he who enables us to receive that divine virtue which flows from the fountainhead, the Father, through Christ the channel, and by thy means enters into our spirit, and there abides and brings forth its glorious fruit. Magnify, then, the Spirit, ye who are partakers of it; "praise, laud, and love his name always, for it is seemly so to do."

My work this morning is to set forth the work of the Holy Spirit, not as a Comforter, or as a Quickener, or as a Sanctifier, but principally as a Teacher, although we shall have to touch upon these other points in passing.

The Holy Ghost is the great Teacher of the Father's children. The Father begets us by his own will through the word of truth. Jesus Christ takes us into union with himself, so that we become in a second sense the children of God. Then God the Holy Spirit breathes into us the "spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Having given us that spirit of adoption, he trains us, becomes our great Educator, cleanses away our ignorance, and reveals one truth after another, until

at last we comprehend with all saints what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and then the Spirit introduces the educated ones to the general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

Concerning this Teacher, these three things--first, what he teaches; secondly, his methods of teaching; and thirdly, the nature and characteristics of that teaching.

I. First, then, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES US. And here indeed we have a wide field spread before us, for he teaches to God's people all that they do that is acceptable to the Father, and all that they know that is profitable to themselves.

1. I say that he teaches them all that they do. Now, there are some things which you and I can do naturally, when we are but children without any teaching. Who ever taught a child to cry? It is natural to it. The first sign of its life is its shrill feeble cry of pain. Ever afterwards you need never send it to school to teach it to utter the cry of its grief, the well known expression of its little sorrows. Ah, my brethren, but you and I as spiritual infants, had to be taught to cry; for we could not even cry of ourselves, till we had received "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abbe, Father." There are cryings and groanings which cannot be uttered in words and speech, simple as this language of the new nature seems to be. But even these feeblest groanings, sighings, cryings, tears, are marks of education. We must be taught to do this, or else we are not sufficient to do even these little things in and of ourselves. Children, as we know, have to be taught to speak, and it is by degrees that they-are able to pronounce first the shorter, and afterwards the longer words. We, too, are taught to speak. We have none of us learned, as yet, the whole vocabulary of

Canaan. I trust we are able to say some of the words; but we shall never be able to pronounce them all till we come into that land where we shall see Christ, and "shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The sayings of the saints, when they are good and true, are the teachings of the Spirit. Marked ye not that passage--"No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost?" He may say as much in dead words, but the spirit's saying, the saying of the soul, he can never attain to, except as he is taught by the Holy Ghost. Those first words which we ever used as Christians--"God be merciful to me a sinner," were taught us by the Holy Spirit; and that song which we shall sing before the throne--"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever," shall but be the ripe fruit of that same tree of knowledge of good and evil, which the Holy Spirit hath planted in the soil of our hearts.

Further, as we are taught to cry, and taught to speak by the Holy Spirit, so are all God's people taught to walk and act by Him. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We may take the best heed to our life, but we shah stumble or go astray unless he who first set us in the path shall guide us in it. "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms." "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." To stray is natural; to keep the path of right is spiritual. To err is human; to be holy is divine. To fall is the natural effect of evil; but to stand is the glorious effect of the Holy Spirit working in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. There was never yet a heavenly thought, never yet a hallowed deed, never yet a consecrated act acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, which was not worked in us by the Holy Ghost. Thou hast worked all our works in us. "For we are his workmanship, created

in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Now as it is with the simple deeds of the Christian, his crying, his speaking, his walking, his acting-all these are teachings of the Holy Ghost--so is it with the higher efforts of his nature. The preaching of the gospel, when it be done aright, is only accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. That sermon which is based upon human genius is worthless, that sermon which has been obtained through human knowledge, and which has no other force in it than the force of logic or of oratory, is spent in vain. God worketh not by such tools as these. He cleanseth not spirits by the water from broken cisterns, neither doth he save souls by thoughts which come from men's brains, apart from the divine influence which goeth with them. We might have all the learning of the sages of Greece, nay, better still, all the knowledge of the twelve apostles put together, and then we might have the tongue of a seraph, and the eyes and heart of a Savior, but apart from the Spirit of the living God, our preaching would yet be vain, and our hearers and ourselves would still abide in our sins. To preach aright can only be accomplished of the Holy Spirit. There may be a thing called preaching that is of human energy, but God's ministers are taught of the Holy One; and when their word is blessed, either to saint or sinner, the blessing cometh not of them, but of the Holy Ghost, and unto Him be all the glory, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

So is it with sacred song. Whose are the wings with which I mount towards the skies in sacred harmony and joy? They are thy wings, O Holy Dove! Whose is the fire with which my spirit flames at times of hallowed consecration? Thine is the flame, O fiery Spirit! thine. Whose is the tongue of fire which rested on the apostolic lip? Thine was that

cleft tongue, thou Holy One of Israel! Whose is that dew which falls upon the withered blade, and makes it smile and fire? Thine are those holy drops thou Dew of God; thou aft that womb of the morning from whence these beauties of holiness proceed. Thou hast worked an in us, and unto thee would we give well-deserved thanks. So, then, all the doings of the Christian, both the little and the major doings, are all the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

2. But now, farther; all that the believer truly know that is profitable to himself is taught him by the Holy Spirit. We may learn very much from the Word of God morally and mentally, but the Christian philosopher understands that there is a distinction between soul and spirit; that the mere natural soul or intellect of man may instruct itself well enough out of the Word of God, but that spiritual things are only to be spiritually discerned, and that until that third, higher principle--the spirit--is infused into us in regeneration, we have not even the capability or the possibility of knowing spiritual things. Now it is this third, higher principle, of which the apostle speaks when he speaks of "body, soul, and spirit." Mental philosophers declare there is no such thing as the third part--spirit. They can find a body and a soul, but no spirit. They are quite right--there is no such thing in natural men. That third principle--the spirit--is an infusion of the Holy Ghost at regeneration, and is not to be detected by mental philosophy; it is altogether a subtler thing; a thing too rare, too heavenly, to be described by Dugald Stewart, or Reid, or Brown, or any of those mighty men who could dissect the mind, but who could not understand the spirit Now, the Spirit of God first gives us a spirit, and then afterwards educates that spirit; and all that that spirit knows is taught it by the Holy Ghost. Perhaps the first thing that we learn is sin: he reproves us of sin. No man knows the exceeding

sinfulness of sin, but by the Holy Ghost. You may punish a man, you may tell him of the wrath of God, and of hen, but you cannot make him know what an evil and a bitter thing sin is till the Holy Ghost hath taught it to him. 'Tis an awful lesson indeed to learn, and when the Holy Spirit makes us sit down upon the stool of penitence, and begins to drill this great truth into us, that sin is damnation in the bud, that sin is hell in the germ: then when we begin to perceive it, we cry out, "Now I know how vile I am, my soul abhorreth itself in dust and ashes." No man, I repeat it, will ever know the sinfulness of sin by argument, by punishment, by moral discipline, or by any means apart from the education of the Holy Ghost. It is a truth beyond the reach of human intellect to know how base a thing sin is. The spirit alone, engrafted and given by the Holy Spirit,--that spirit alone can learn the lesson, and only the Holy Ghost can teach it.

The next lesson the Spirit teaches us, is the total ruin, depravity, and helplessness of self. Men pretend to know this by nature, but they do not know it; they can only speak the words of experience as parrots speak like men. But to know myself utterly lost and ruined; to know myself so lost, "that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing," is a knowledge so distasteful, so hateful, so abominable to the carnal intellect, that man would not learn it if he could, and if he hath learnt it, it is a clear proof that God the Holy Spirit has made him willing to see the truth, and willing to receive it. When we sometimes hear great preachers telling us that there is something grand left in man yet, that when Adam fell he might have broken his little finger, but did not ruin himself entirely, that man is a grand being, in fact a noble creature and that we are all wrong in telling men they are depraved, and thundering out the law of God at them--am I astonished that they should speak thus? Nay, my brethren, it is the

language of the carnal mind the whole world over, and in every age. No wonder that a man is eloquent upon this point, every man needs to be eloquent when he has to defend a lie. No wonder that glorious sentences have been uttered, and flowery periods poured forth from a cornucopia of eloquence upon this subject. A man need exhaust all logic and all rhetoric to defend a-falsehood; and it is not a wonder that he seeks to do it, for man believes himself to be rich, and increased in goods, and to have need of nothing, till the Holy Ghost teaches him that he is naked, and poor, and miserable.

These lessons being learned, the Spirit proceeds to teach us further--the nature and character of God. God is to be heard in every wind, and seen in every cloud, but not all of God. God's goodness, and God's omnipotence, the world clearly manifesteth to us in the works of creation, but where do I read of his grace, where do I read of his mercy, or of his justice? There are lines which I cannot read in creation. Those must have ears indeed who can hear the notes of mercy or of grace whispering in the evening gale. No, brethren, these parts of God's attributes are only revealed to us in this precious Book, and there they are so revealed that we cannot know them until the Spirit opens our eyes to perceive them. To know the inflexibility of Divine justice, and to see how God exacts punishment for every jot and little of sin, and yet to know that that full-justice does not eclipse his equally full-mercy, but that the two move around each other, without for a single instant coming into contact, or conflict, or casting the slighest shallow one or the other; to see how God is just and yet the justifier of the ungodly, and so to know God that my spirit loves his nature, appreciates his attributes, and desires to be like him--this is a knowledge which astronomy cannot teach, which all the researches of the sciences can never give to us. We must be taught God, if we ever

learn of him--we must be taught God, by God the Holy Ghost. Oh that we may learn this lesson well, that we may be able to sing of his faithfulness, of his covenant love, of his immutability, of his boundless mercy, of his inflexible justice, that we may be able to talk to one another concerning that incomprehensible One, and may see him even as a man seeth his friend; and may come to walk with him as Enoch did all the days of our life I This, indeed, must be an education given to us by the Holy Ghost.

But not to tarry on these points, though they are prolific of thought, let us observe that the Holy Spirit specially teaches to us Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Ghost who manifests the Savior to us in the glory of his person; the complex character of his manhood and of his deity; it is he who tells us of the love of his heart, of the power of his arm, of the clearness of his eye, the preciousness of his blood, and of the prevalence of his plea. To know that Christ is my Redeemer, is to know more than Plato could have taught me. To know that I am a member of his body, of his flesh and of his bones; that my name is on his breast, and engraver on the palms of his hands, is to know more than the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge could teach to all their scholars, learn they never so well. Not at the feet of Gamaliel did Paul learn to say-"He loved me, and gave himself for me." Not in the midst of the Rabbis, or at the feet of the members of the Sanhedrim, did Paul learn to cry--"Those things which I counted gain, I now count loss for Christ's sake." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." No, this must have been taught as he himself confesseth--"not of flesh and blood, but of the Holy Ghost."

I need only hint that it is also the Spirit who teaches us our adoption. Indeed, an the privileges of the new covenant, beginning from regeneration, running through redemption, justification pardon,

sanctification, adoption, preservation, continual safety, even unto au abundant enhance into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ--all is the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and especially that last point, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." He leads us into the truth of joys to come, carries our spirit upwards, and gives us

"That inward calm within the breast,
The surest pledge of glorious rest,
Which for the Church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains."

II. And now I come to the second point, which was this--THE METHODS BY WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES GOD'S CHILDREN THESE PRECIOUS THINGS. Here we must remark that we know nothing of the precise way of operation, because the Spirit is mysterious; we know not whence he cometh nor whither he goeth. But still let us describe what we can perceive. And first, in teaching God's people, one of the first things the Spirit does is to excite interest in their minds. I frequently find that when men are being educated for the ministry, the hardest thing is to set them going. They are like bats on the ground; if once a bat gets on the earth he cannot fly until he creeps to the top of a stone and gets a little above the earth, and then he gets wing and can fly well enough. So there are many who have not got their energies aroused, they have talent but it is asleep, and we want a kind of railway-whistle to blow in their ears to make them start up and rub away the film from their eyes so that they may see. Now it is just so with men, when the Spirit of God begins to teach them. He excites their interest in the

things which he wishes them to learn he shows them that these things here a personal bearing upon their soul's present and eternal welfare. He so brings precious truth home, that what the man thought was utterly indifferent yesterday, he now begins to esteem inestimably precious "Oh!" said he, "theology I of what use can it be to me?" But now the knowledge of Christ and him crucified has become to him the most desirable and excellent of all the sciences. The Holy Spirit awakens his interest.

That done, he gives to the man a teachable spirit. There be men who will not learn. They profess that they want to know, but you never found the right way of teaching them. Teach them by little and little, and they easy--"Do you think I am a child?" Tell them a great deal at once, and they say--"You have not the power to make me comprehend!" will I have been competed sometimes to say to a man, when I have been trying to make him understand, and he has said "I cannot understand you," "Well, sir, I am thankful it is not my duty to give you an understanding if you have none." Now, the Holy Spirit makes a man willing to learn in any shape. The disciple sits down at the feet of Christ; and let Christ speak as he may, and teach him as he will, whether with the rod, or with a smile, he is quite willing to learn. Distasteful the lessons are, but the regenerated pupil loves to learn best the very things he once hated. Cutting to his pride the doctrines of the gospel each one of them may be, but for this very reason he loves them; for he cries, "Lord, humble me; Lord, bring me down; teach me those things that will make me cover my head with dust and ashes; show me my nothingness; teach me my emptiness; reveal to me my filthiness." So that the Holy Spirit thus proceeds with his work awaking interest, and enkindling a teachable spirit. This done, the Holy Ghost in the next place sets truth in a clear light, How bard it

is sometimes to state a fact which you perfectly understand yourself, in such a way that another man may see it. It is like the telescope; there are many persons who are disappointed with a telescope, because whenever they walk into an observatory and put their eye to the glass, expecting to see the rings of Saturn, and the belts of Jupiter, they have said, "I can see nothing at all; a piece of glass, and a grain or two of dust is all I can see!" "But," says the astronomer, when he comes, "I can see Saturn in all her glory." Why cannot you? Because the focus does not suit the stranger's eye. By a little skill, the focus can be altered so that the observer may be able to see what he could not see before. So is it with language; it is a sort of telescope by which I enable another to see my thoughts, but I cannot always give him the right focus. Now the Holy Spirit always gives the right focus to every truth. He sheds a light so strong and forcible upon the Word, that the spirit says. "Now I see it, now I understand it." For even here, in this precious Book, there are words which I have looked at a hundred times, but I could not understand them, till at some favored hour, the key-word seemed as if it leaped up from the midst of the verse and said to me, "Look at the verse in my light," and at once I perceived--not always from a word in the verse itself, but sometimes in the context--I perceived the meaning which I could not see before. This, too, is a part of the Spirit's training--to steed a light upon truth. But the Spirit not only enlightens the truth, but he enlightens the understanding. 'Tis marvellous, too, how the Holy Ghost does teach men who seemed as if they never could learn. I would not wish to say anything which my brother might be grieved at; but I do know some brethren, I won't say they are here today, but they are not out of the place come brethren whose opinion I would not take in anything worldly on any account. If h were anything to do with pounds, shillings, and

pence anything where human judgment was concerned, I should not consult them; but those men have a deeper,. truer, and more experimental knowledge of the Word of God, than many who preach it, because the Holy Spirit never tried to teach them grammar, and never meant to. teach-them business never wanted to teach them astronomy, but he has taught them the Word of God, and they understand it. Other teachers have labored to beat the elements. of science into them but without success, for they are as thick and addled in they brains as they can well be; but the Holy Spirit teas taught them the Word of God, and. they are clear enough there. I come in close contact with some young men. When. we are taking our lessens for illustration out of the sciences, they seem to be all profound, and when I ask them a question to see if they have understood; they are lost; but, mark you, when we come to read: a chapter out of some old Puritanic book--come to theology--those brethren give-me the smartest and sharpest answers of the whole class. When we once some to deal with things experimental and controversial, I find those men are able to double up their opponents, and vanquish them at once, because they are deeply read in the Word of God. The Spirit has taught them the things of Christ, but he has not taught them anything else. I have perceived, also, that when the Spirit of God: has enlarged the understanding to receive the Bible truth that understanding becomes more capable receiving other truth. I heard, some time ago, from a brother minister, when we were comparing notes, the story of a man who had been the dullest creature that was known. He was not more than one grade above an idiot, but when he was converted to God, one of the first things he wanted to do, was to read the Bible. They had a long, long teak to teach him a verse, but he would learn it, he would master it. He stuck at it as hard as ever he could, till he was able to read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God." That man was by-and-bye asked to engage in prayer. At first he hardly put a sentence together. By-and-bye he arrived at a considerable degree of fluency, because he would do it. He would not stand still, he said, in the prayer-meeting, and not have a word to say for his Master. He began to read his Bible much, and to pray with a great deal of profit and acceptableness to those that heard, and after awhile, he actuary began to speak in the villages, and became sometime after an honored and acceptable pastor of one of our Baptist Churches. Had it not been for the Spirit of God first expanding the understanding to receive religious truth, that understanding might have been cramped, and fettered, and fast bolted to this very day, and the man might have been ever after an idiot, and so have gone down to his grave, while now he stands up to tell to sinners round, in burning language, the story of the cross of Christ. The Spirit teaches us by enlightening the understanding.

Lest I weary you, let me hurry on through the other points. He teaches us also by refreshing the memory. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance." He puts all those old treasures into the ark of our soul, and when the time comes, he opens it, and brings out these precious things in right good order, and shows them to us again and again. He refreshes the memory, and when this is done, he does better, he teaches us the Word, by making us feel its effect, and that, after all, is the best way of learning. You may try to teach a child the meaning of the term "sweetness;" but words will not avail, give him some honey and he win never forget it. You might seek to tell him of the glorious mountains, and the Alps, that pierce the clouds and send their snows peaks, like white-robed ambassadors up to the courts of heaven: take him there, let him see them, and he will never forget them. You might seek to paint to him the grandeur of the American continent, with its

hills, and lakes, and rivers, such as the world saw not before: let him go and view it, and he will know more of the land than he could know by all your teaching, when he site at home. So the Holy Spirit does not only tell us of Christ's love; he sheds it abroad in the heart. He does not merely tell us of the sweetness of pardon; but he gives us a sense of no condemnation, and then we know an about it, better than we could have done by any teaching of words and thoughts. He takes us into the banqueting house and waves the banner of love over us. He bids us visit the garden of nets, and makes us lie among the lilies. He gives us that bundle of camphire, even our beloved, and bids us place it all night betwixt our breasts. He takes us to the cross of Christ, and he bids us put our finger into the print of the nails, and our hands into his side, and tells us not come "faithless, but believing," and so in the highest and most effectual manner he teacheth us to profit.

III. But now I shall come to my third point, although I feel so if I wished my subject were somewhat less comprehensive, but indeed it is a fault which does not often happen--to have too much rather than too little to speak of, except when we come upon a topic where God is to be glorified, and here indeed our tongue must be like the pen of a ready writer, when we speak of the things that we have made touching the king.

I am now to speak to you about the CHARACTERISTICS AND NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TEACHING. And first I would remark that the Holy Ghost teaches sovereignty. He teaches whom he pleases. He takes the fool and makes him know the wonders of the dying love of Christ, to bring aspiring wisdom low and make the pride of man humble and abase itself. And as the Spirit teaches whom he wills, so he teaches when he wills. He has his own hours of instruction, and he will not be limited and bound by us. And then again he teaches as he wills--same by affliction,

some by. communion; some he teaches by the Word read, some by the Word spoken, some by neither, but directly by his own agency. And so also the Holy Spirit is a sovereign in that he teaches in whatever degree he pleases. He will make one man learn much, while another comprehends but little. Some Christiana wear their beards early--they come to a rapid and high degree of maturity, and that on a sudden, while others creep but slowly to the goal, sad are very long in reaching it. Some Christians in early years understand more than others whose hairs have turned grey. The Holy Ghost is a sovereign. He doe not have all his pupils in one class, and them all the same lesson by simultaneous instruction; but each man is in a separate class, each man learning a separate lesson. Some beginning at the end of the book, some at the beginning, and some in the middle--some learning one doctrine and some another, some going backwards and some forwards. The Holy Spirit teacheth sovereignly, and giveth to every man according as he wills, but then, wherever he teaches at all, he teaches effectually. He never failed to make us learn yet. No scholar was ever turned out of the Spirit's school incorrigible. He teaches all his children, not some of them--"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children,"--the last sentence being a proof that they have been effectually taught. Never once did the Spirit bring home the truth to the heart and yet that heart fail to receive it. He hath modes of touching the secret springs of life, and putting the truth into the very core of the being. He casts his healing mixtures into the fountain itself, and not into the streams. We instruct the ear, and the ear is far removed from the heart; he teaches the heart itself, and therefore his every word falleth upon good soil, and bringeth forth good and abundant fruit--he teaches effectually. Dear brother, do you feel yourself to be a great fool sometimes? Your great Schoolmaster will

make a good scholar of you yet. He will so teach you, that you shall be able to enter the kingdom of heaven knowing as much as the brightest saints. Teaching thus sovereignly and effectually, I may add, he teaches infallibly. We teach you errors through want of caution, sometimes through over zeal, and again through the weakness of our own mind. In the greatest preacher or teacher that ever lived there was some degree of error, and hence our hearers should always bring what we say to the law and the testimony; but the Holy Ghost never teaches error, if thou hast learned anything by the Spirit of God, it is pure, unadulterated, undiluted truth. Put thyself daily under his teaching, and thou shalt never learn a word amiss, nor a thought awry, but become infallibly taught, well taught in the whole truth as it is in Jesus.

Further, where the Spirit thus teaches infallibly he teaches continually. Whom once he teaches, he never leaves till he has completed their education. On, and on, and on, however dull the scholar, however frail the memory, however vitiated the mind, he still continues with his gracious work, till he has trained us up and made us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Nor does he leave us till he has taught us completely; for as our text says, "He shall teach you all things." There is not a truth so high that it shall not yet be mastered, nor a doctrine so hard that it shall not yet be received. High up, high up, tower the heights of the hill of knowledge, but there, when there, thy feet shall stand. Weary may be the way and weak thy knees, but up thither thou shalt climb, and one day with thy forehead bathed in the sunlight of heaven, thy soul shall stand and look down on tempests, mists, and all earth's clouds and smoke, and see the Master face to face, and be like him, and know him as he is. This is the joy of the Christian, that he shall be completely taught, and that the Holy Spirit will never give him up till; he has

taught him all truth.

I fear, however, that this morning I weary you. Such a theme as this will not be likely to be suitable to all minds. As I have already said, the spiritual mind alone receiveth spiritual things, and the doctrine of the Spirit's agency will never be very interesting to those who are entire strangers to it. I could not make another man understand the force of an electric shock unless he has felt it. It would not be likely at all that he would believe in those secret energies which move the world, unless he had some means of testing for himself. And those of you that never felt the Spirit's energy, are as much strangers to it as a stone would be. You are out of your element when you hear of the Spirit. You know nothing of his divine power; you have never been taught of him, and therefore how should you be careful to know what truths he teaches?

I close, therefore, with this sorrowful reflection. Alas, alas, a thousand times alas, that there should be so many who know not their danger, who feel not their load, and in whose heart the light of the Holy Ghost hath never shone! Is it your case my dear hearer, this morning? I do not ask you whether you have been ever educated in the school of learning; that you may be, and you may have taken your degree and been first-class in honors, but you may still be as the wild ass's colt that knows nothing about these things. Religion, and the truth of it, is not to be learnt by the head. Years of reading, hours of assiduous study, will never make a man a Christian. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Oh! art thou destitute of the Spirit of the living God? For oh! I charge thee to remember this my hearer: if in thy soul mysterious and supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit has never been shed abroad, thou art an utter stranger to all the things of God. The promises are not thine; heaven is not thine,

thou art on thy road to the land of the dead, to the region of the corpse, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Oh that the Spirit of God may rest upon you now! Bethink you, you are absolutely dependent upon his influence. You are in God's hand today to be saved or to be lost--not in your own hands, but in his. You are dead in sins; unless he quickens you, you must remain so. The moth beneath your finger is not more absolutely at your mercy than you are now at the mercy of God. Let him but will to leave you as you are, and you are lost; but oh! if mercy speaks and says, "Let that man live," you are saved. I would that you could feel the weight of this tremendous doctrine of sovereignty. It is like the hammer of Thor, it may shake your heart however stout it be, and make your rocky soul tremble to its base.

"Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on his firm decree."

Your destiny hangs there now; and will you rebel against the God in whose hand your sours eternal fate now rests? Will you lift the puny hand of your rebellion against him who alone can quicken you--without whose gracious energy you are dead, and must be destroyed? Will you go this day and sin against light and against knowledge t Will you go to day and reject mercy which is proclaimed to you in Christ Jesus? If so, no fool was ever so mad as you are, to reject him without whom you are dead, and lost, and ruined. O that instead thereof there may be the sweet whisper of the Spirit saying, "Obey the divine command, believe on Christ and live I" Hear thou the voice of Jehovah, who cries, "This is the commandment, that ye believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent?" Thus obedient, God saith within himself, "I have set my love upon him, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he hath known my name;" and you shall yet live to sing in heaven of that

sovereignty which, when your soul trembled in the balances, decided for your salvation, and gave you light and joy unspeakable. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on Calvary's cross, "and whosoever believeth on him shall be saved." "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." Believe that record truer cast down your weapons; yield to the sovereignly of the Holy Ghost; and he shall assuredly prove to you that, in that very yielding, there was a proof that he had loved you; for he made you yield; he made you willing to bow before him in the day of his power. May the Holy Spirit now rest on the word I have spoken, for Jesu's sake!

Chapter 29

A Sense of Pardoned Sin

A Sermon

(No. 316)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 20th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back"--Isaiah 38:17,

HEZEKIAH HERE SPEAKS POSITIVELY on a matter concerning which he had not the remotest shadow of n doubt. He kind trusted his God, he had cast himself upon the merit of the promised Messiah, and as the result of that faith, assurance had been granted to him, and he now sings with unfaltering tongue, "Thou," even thou, O God, Most High and Most Just, "thou hast cast all my sins," great and innumerable though they be, thou hast east them all "behind thy back." Oh, what a joyous thing it is to have a ray of heavenly sunlight in the soul, and to hear the very voice of God as he walks in the garden of our souls in the cool of the day, saying to us, "Son thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee." The whisper of that heavenly voice may raise our heart to bliss almost divine it confers a joy that is not to be squalled by all the corn and the wine, and all the pleasures which the riches and the-enjoyments of this world can afford. To have the divine kiss of acceptance to be robed in the best robe, to have the ring on the hand and the shoes on the feet to hear the heavenly music and dancing with which the returning prodigals are returned to their Father's house,--this, indeed, is a bliss worth worlds.

My dear brethren, there are some who choose to dwell to a very large degree in their ministry upon such enjoyments as these, which concern

the experience of the child of God; but I fear they make it the main object of their preaching, to advance a system of frames and feelings. On the other hand, there are other brethren who constantly insist upon the doctrine of salvation by faith, and by faith alone, but almost forget to testify to the experience which is the result of faith. Now, both of these men were, doubtless; but nevertheless, their error is founded upon a conscientious desire to advance the truth. The brother who preaches experience, and insists upon it is afraid lest any should possess a fictitious faith which is not the faith of God's elect. He therefore preaches experience as a test and a touchstone by which he may try the spirits whether they be of God. On the other hand, our other brother who deals with faith, and not with experience, is afraid lest men should make a God of their feelings, and lest they should rest in their experience, and not in the cross of Christ. He is so anxious to maintain in its clearness the fact that we are saved by what Christ felt, and not by what we feel, the great truth that we are redeemed by his most precious blood, and not by any experience of our own that perhaps he overshoots the mark, and forgets that where there is faith there will be experience, and where there is a true experience-there must have been a real faith.

Suffer me, then, just to spend one moment in trying to show how these two truths really meet--a divine experience and a single faith--necessary and joyous feelings and a yet more necessary and unalloyed confidence in Christ. The fact is, that we are saved by faith, and not by feeling. "We walk by faith and not by sight." Yet there is as much connection between faith and hallowed feeling, as there is between the root and the flower. Faith is permanent, just as the root is ever in the ground; feeling is casual, and has its seasons. Just as the bulb does not always shoot up the green stem; far less is

it always crowned with the many, many-coloured flower. Faith is the tree, the essential tree; our feelings are like the appearance, of that tree during the different seasons of the year. Sometimes our soul is full of bloom and blossom, and the bees hum pleasantly, and gather honey within our hearts. It is then that our feelings bear witness to the life of our faith, just as the buds of spring bear witness to the life of the tree. And, our feelings gather still greater vigor, and if we come to the summer of our delights, again, perhaps, we begin to wither into the sere and yellow leaf of autumn; nay, sometimes the winter of our despondency and despair will strip away every leaf from the tree and our poor faith stands like a blasted stem without a sign of verdure. And yet. my brethren, so long as the tree of faith is there we are saved. Whether faith blossom or not, whether it bring forth joyous fruit in our experience or not, so long as it be there in all its permanence v e are saved. Yet should we have the gravest reason to distrust the life of our faith, if it did not sometimes blossom with joy, and often bring forth fruit unto holiness. Experience, if I may so speak, is like a sun-dial When I wish to know the time of day with my spirit, I look upon it. But then there must be the sun shining, or else I cannot tell by my sun-dial what and where I am. It a cloud passes before the face of the sun, my dial is of little service to me, but then my faith comes out in all its excellency, for my faith pierces the cloud, and reads the state of my soul--not by the sunshade on the dial, but by the position of the sun in the heavens themselves. Faith is a greater and grander thing than all experience, less fickle, more stable. It is the root of grace, and these are but the flowers, the germs, the buds. Yet let us not speak against experiences, let us value them, for it is a grand thing to sit in the sunshine of God's presence it is a noble thing to eat the grapes of Eshcol, even while we are in

the wilderness. It is true there is a greater grandeur in believing heaven to be mine when I can see no evidence thereof; yet it is a sweeter thing

"To read my title clear
To mansions in the skies."

I shall now turn to the one point of experience which seems to be brought out prominently in our text, that blessed experience of a consciousness of pardon, a sense of pardoning love shed abroad in the soul. I shall view my text in two ways. There are two sorts of pardon which God gives, and it is very needful to distinguish between them. First, I shall speak of a consciousness of pardon enjoyed by a man as a forgiven sinner. When I have so done, I shall speak of that other consciousness of pardon, more true to my text, more intimately connected with it, a sense of forgiveness enjoyed by man, not as a sinner, but as a child, a pardoned child he knows he has already been forgiven by the Judge, but who now smiles to know that he is pardoned also by the Father.

I. First, then, let me speak of A SENSE OF PARDON AS GIVEN BY GOD TO THE SINNER.

We are not to wait for this sense of pardon before we come to Christ. The soul beholding itself lost. ruined. and naked, is commanded in the Word of God to trust itself, just as it is. in the hands of Christ. Faith obeys that command, and without one glimpse of joy within, commits the soul, all trembling and quivering with fear, into the hand of Christ, as into the hand of an all-loving and all-powerful Redeemer. I repeat it, we are not to stop for a sense of pardon until we do this. Faith is our duty, and the sense of pardon is our privilege. We must first obey, and then receive the reward. I, feeling that I am utterly undone, and that there 1:no reason in myself wily I should have saved,

cast myself at the foot of Christ's cross, and trust him with myself eternally. As the result of that, God afterwards, of his own free grace, by his Spirit, sheds abroad in my soul an infallible witness, which proves to me that I was forgiven in that very hour when I closed in with Christ, and trusted my soul in his hands.

Now, this consciousness of pardon includes many things, although it is not alike comprehensive in all souls. With some uninstructed persons, who know too little of scripture, all the consciousness they enjoy is this, that sin is forgiven. They feel in their souls that every till that ever stood on record in the book of God, has been blotted out once for all. Joined with this they are released from the terror and dread which once weighed upon their spirits. The nightmare bus departed; that huge apparition which haunted them, a consciousness of their guilt, is gone and laid in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, safely for ever. But, being ignorant and uninstructed, they are not conscious of more than this,--the sum total of their joys lies here--that till is forgiven that the wrath of God is turned away and that they shall not now into the pit of hell. If the Holy Ghost, however. is pleased to slyer them more at this time, they have a consciousness that God loves them. They are sore that Jehovah looks upon them as his favourites, as those to whom he has a special grace unit a peculiar love. They, then, at that very moment, begin to read their title to the blessings of the covenant. They see that all things are theirs because they are Christ's, and that since there is no condemnation, there must he every blessing vouchsafed by the very act which took away the condemning sentence. It sometimes happens too, that this sense of pardon swells till it exceeds the narrow bounds of time, till the spirit is not only sure that it is reconciled to God, and that its life is now secure; but it sees heaven itself as at a little distance, begins to realize its

own indefeasible title to the inheritance of the saints in light--nay, in the hour of pardon I have sometimes known the emancipated spirit by faith, walk the golden streets; and lay its finger on the strings of the glorious harp of heavenly praise. There is no telling how comprehensive at times this sense of pardon may become. It may embrace a past eternity--receiving its election, an eternity to come--beholding its glory. It may go into the depths of hell and see the fires for ever quenched or mount to the glories of heaven and see all these splendours given to it to be its own. And, yet, as I have said before, it is not so in all eases, for with many uninstructed minds, the only sense of pardon they get, is a removal of terror, and an assured conviction that their sins are all forgiven them.

But, saith one, "How does this sense of pardon come? In what manner and forms?" We answer, it comes in different ways and forms. Many men receive their consciousness of pardon in an instant. They were reading the Word of God perhaps, and some one text seemed as if it rose up from its fellows, illuminated with heavenly fire, and they saw that text printed on their own hearts. Such a one as this;--Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Or, such another 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." The man was doubting before, full of gloom and despondency, in a minute all is light, and life, and joy in his heart. If he could have passed from hell to heaven by a single step, the change in his soul could not have been more manifest and clear. From being heavily burdened, he has suddenly become light of soul; from being black from head to foot, he comes to view himself washed completely white, and standing in the snowy garment of the Savior's

righteousness. With others this sense of pardon is of slower growth. It begins with a faint gleam of hope, another ray, and yet another, till at last the morning star arises in their souls; the light increases still, till at last the morning star of hope gives way to the sun of righteousness himself, who was risen with healing beneath his wings. I have known some obtain peace in an instant, and others have been months, if not years. before they could walk with a steady and firm footstep, and say with unquivering lip,--"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that the is able to keep that which I hate committed to him."

This conviction is sometimes conveyed to us in the most extraordinary manner. I have known it brought home to the soul by some singular saying of a minister, by some saying so appropriate to one's own case, that we were compelled to say,--"That is not the voice of man, but the voice of God, for man could not know my heart. that sentence is surely spoken by one who tries the heart and searches the reins." At other times some strange providence has been the singular means of giving joy and relief. The strangest story I ever remembered to have read, with regard to peace given after a long season of despondency, was the ease of Mrs. Honeywood, whom you may have read of. Living in puritanic times, she had been accustomed to hear the most thundering of its preachers. She became so thoroughly broken in peace with the consciousness of sin, that for, I think, some ten years, if not twenty years, the poor woman was given up to despair--she was absolutely certain that there was no hope for her. It seemed that in this ease, a kind of miracle must be wrought to give her peace of mind. One day an eminent minister of Christ, conversing with her told her there yet was hope that Jesus Christ was able to save to the uttermost, them that come unto God by him. Grasping a Venice glass that stood on the table,

made of the thinnest material that can be conceived, the woman dashed it down on the ground, and said,--"I am lost, as sure as that glass is broken into a thousand pieces." To her infinite surprise, the glass suffered no damage whatever, remained without a crack. From that instant she believed that God had spoken to her. She opened her ears to hear the words of the minister, and peace poured into her spirit. I mention that as an extraordinary and singular instance--perhaps the like is not to be found on record anywhere else. But God has his ways and means. He will by some means, by every means, by the strangest and most miraculous means, bring his people to a sense of pardon. If they reject all other ways, he will sooner work a miracle than, that his banished ones shall not be brought home.

Permit me to dwell for another minute or two upon the joy which this sense of pardon creates. I speak now from experience. That happy day when my soul first found a Savior, and learned to cling to his dear feet, was a day never to be forgotten by me. An obscure child, unknown, unheard of, I sat and listened to the Word of God; and that precious text, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth," lead me to the cross of Christ. I can testify that the joy of that day is utterly indescribable. I could have leaped, I could have danced. There ergs no expression, however fanatical, which would have been out of keeping with the joy of my spirit at that hour. Many days have passed since then of Christian experience, but there has never been a day which has had that full exhilaration that sparkling delight which that first day had. I though t I could have sprang from the seat on which I sat, and have called out with the wildest of those Methodist brethren v ho were present "I am forgiven! I am forgiven! A monument of grace! A sinner saved by blood!" Concerning that day all other occurrences are dim in my remembrance. I know nothing of what was said to me, or of

what happened but just this, that my spirit save its chains broken to pieces, and that I walked an emancipated man, an heir of heaven, a forgiven one, accepted in Christ Jesus, plucked out of the miry clay and out of the horrible pit, with my feet set upon a rock and my goings established. The joy of the hears when it receives pardon may be imagined by some of you who have never tasted it, but if you ever come to know it, you will say with the queen of Sheba, "the half has not been told me." Men when they are in this delightful state, are very communicative. they cannot hold themselves in. They are like John Bunyan who wanted to tell the crows on the ploughed land about it. They speak to the very trees. They think the world is in harmony with themselves; they go forth with joy, and they are led forth with peace, the mountains and the hills break forth before them Into singing, and the trees of the field do clap their hands. The birds sing, to be in tune with their hearts. The sun shines more brightly that day than he ever did before; or if the rain descends, it is but the very emblem of those showers of mercy which have made glad the spirit. On that day at least, if never before, the man becomes the world's great priest, he stands in the midst of all his fellow priests the great high priest of the world's universe. He walks in his white garments; he wears about him the belle of the music of praise; he offers the sacrifice which is acceptable to God, and his ours heart is the chief offering which he presents. Oh! on that day the world seems to be a great organ, and the fingers of the pardoned man run along the keys and wake the music even to thunder, till the eternal sonnets of the ages long past dwindle into mere silence before the hallelujahs of that acclaim of praise, to which the pardoned sinner wakes the worlds.

Do not think I am fanatical in this, I speak but sober sense. In fact, I fall short in my descriptions of the joy of the spirit in which God

has shed abroad a glimpse of his love, and a token of his grace. Do I hear some friend whisper, that such feelings are fanatical. Ah! my friend if It were so, it were a fanaticism devoutly to be roughs for; It were one for which the most sober mind might strain itself for ever. But you tell us this is fanaticism, for a man to be sure that he is pardoned. But pause awhile. Will you venture to say that this book is itself fanatical, that the Bible is a book full of enthusiasm and vain conceits. Oh, no, you believe this to be a book written in sober earnest. Well, then, the feelings of a pardoned man are but the necessary and natural consequence of the truths of this book. Is there each a thing as pardon taught here? there not such-words as these?--"Blessed is the than whose iniquity is forgiven."--"Blessed is he to whom the Lord imputeth not his iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."--"Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Are there not words here which tell us that Jesus Christ came into the World to seek and to save that which is lost; that there in such a thing as salvation, such a thing as regeneration, such a thing as passing out of darkness marvellous light such all thing as being transplanted from the kingdom of darkness, and taken into the kingdom of God's dear Son? If the Bible teaches us that there are such things, and if such things are realities in the experience of Christian men, it were a libel upon that book if men were not happy when they received them. In feet if the experience of a Christian at the time of his conversion were not singularly nay, excessively joyful, it might be a, contradiction to the teaching of this word But, I say it, and say it boldly, all the transports that the most joyous spirit ever knew in the hour of its pardon are warranted by this Word; nay, not only warranted, but they fall short of what this look would warrant us in receiving. "But," saith one, "I cannot understand that a man can be sure that he

is pardoned." That great and excellent man, Dr. Johnson, used to hold the opinion that no man ever could know that he was pardoned: that there was no such thing as assurance of faith. Perhaps, if Dr. Johnson had studied his Bible a little more, and had had a little more of the enlightenment of the Spirit, he, too, might have come to know his own pardon. Certainly, he was no very excellent judge of' theology, no more than he was of porcelain, which he once attempted to make, and never succeeded. I think both in theology and porcelain his opinion is at little value. You say, how can a man know that he is pardoned? There is a text which says--"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; is it irrational to believe that I am saved? "He that believeth hath eternal life," saith Christ, in John's gospel. I believe in Christ; am I absurd in believing that I have eternal life? I find the apostle Paul speaking by the Holy-Ghost, and saying--"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Being justified by faith we have peace with God." If I know that my trust is fixed on Jesus only, and that I have faith in him, were it not ten thousand time. more absurd for me not to be at peace than for me to be filled with my unspeakable. It is but taking God at his word, when the soul knows as a necessary consequence of its faith that it is caved. But, besides that, suppose it should be true that God himself, stepping as you think out of the order of nature, absolutely speaks to every individual man, and seals on their hearse the witness that they are forgiven suppose it to be so, however hard you think the supposition to be--would it be unnatural then, that the spirit should rejoice? Now, such is just the fact, literally And positively; for the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are born of God. And I will tell you this, though I be censured for fanaticism in it, there are times with every child of God, when he

could not doubt of his acceptance with Christ, when his being saved is a more palpable and sure truth than even the fact that he is in existence; when all the arguments you could possibly bring could not shake him, because he has the infallible witness of the Holy Ghost that he is born of God. Have you never seen some poor servant girl accosted by a clever infidel, who begins to cut her down in all her principles, and laugh at her, and tell her she is a poor deluded thing. She answers him, bears with him, answers him again and again in her own simple style. You can see that her arguments are not conclusive or logical, but wait till she gets to the end, and you hear her say,--"Well, sir, you know a great deal more than I do, and I am not able to speak as you can; I do not wish to think as you think; but, sir, if what you have said be true, you cannot disprove what I feel in here; I feel that I am a child of God; I know I am, and you may as soon reason me out of the fact that what I see does exist, and what I feel has a real cause, as reason me out of this fact, which I know in my inmost soul, namely, that I have passed from death unto life, and am a child of God." Come here, blind man! His eyes are opened; now try and convince that man he does not see. "No," says he, "that is one thing I know. Other things I may be mistaken about; but one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Here, bring up that sick man who has been in bed this last fifteen years a cripple. A miracle is wrought, he is restored, and he begins to leap. Bring up out friend of the academy, and let him argue against him.--"Your leg is not in a sound state. I tell you, you are not well, you ate not cured; you don't feel happy, you don't feel restored and recruited in strength. "Oh," says he, "I don't care for all your arguments, nor for all the Latin phrases that you use. I am cured, that is a matter of consciousness with me, and I am not to be beaten out of it." So it is with the Christian; there are times when he

can say,--"I am saved, I am forgiven." The Lord hath said to him,--"I am thy salvation," and no reasoning, however sophistical no argument, however omnipotent it may seem to be, can shake him, or make him renounce his "which hath great recompense of reward."

And, now, my dear hearers, before I leave this point, to dwell for a few minutes on the second part of my subject. I want to ask you a question or two. Have you ever had this consciousness of pardon in your lives? "No," says one, "I never had; I wish I had; I mean to wait for it." You may wait till you are lost before you will ever have it by waiting for it. Your business is to go to Christ as you are, and trust him, and you shall have it. To sit still, and not to obey that great commandment, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," is the very way to make your damnation doubly sure. I hope that you will find this precious pearl unless you sell all that you have and buy that divine field, Christ Jesus, and there find this pearl of great price. "Ay, but" saith another, "I feel I have never had it, and I don't want it." Mark this, my hearer: as God's witness I speak to you to-day, and if you reject my warning now, in that hour when you lie quivering on a dying bell, perhaps this uplifted finger and these eyes may be a vision for you then. If thou shalt never have in thy soul a consciousness of pardon on this side of the grave, I fear that thou shalt come to thy grave full of sin, and after death shall be the judgment, and after the judgment the wrath to come. This which thou thinkest to be enthusiasm and fanatical is essential to thy soul's salvation, Oh, put it not from thee. Despise it not. Long for it. Cry for it Pant after it. And the Lord God give thee yet to know that thou art his child, and that thou art passed from death unto life! A better wish no heart can wish thee. A larger benediction than that, no ministers lips could pronounce on thee. God bring thee out of thy state of lethargy and slumber, and

darkness, and bring thee to seek and find the Savior, whom to know is to receive pardon in the conscience, and joy in the soul!

II. And now I shall want your patient attention but for a few moments while I take the second part of my subject and dwell upon it briefly. I have sometimes heard uninstructed Christians ask how it is that when a man is once pardoned he is nevertheless to ask every day that his sins may be forgiven. We teach, and we are bold to affirm it again and again, and confess the teaching, that the moment a sinner believes all his sins are put away; past, present, and to come, they are all gone so far as God the Judge is concerned; there is not left one sin against any of his people, nor shall there be. "He seeth no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel." And yet our Master tells us to bow our knee and say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." How can we ask for that we already possess? Why seek a pardon which we already enjoy? The difficulty lies in a forgetfulness of the relationship which Christians sustain to God. As a sinner I come to Christ and trust him. God is then a Judge; he takes the great book of the Court, strikes out my sins and acquits me. At the same moment, out of his great love, he adopts me into his family. Now I stand in quite a different relationship to him from what I ever did before. I am not so much his subject as his child. He is no longer to me a Judge but has become to me a Father. And now I have new rules, new laws; now I have a new discipline; now I have new treatment; now I have new obedience. I go and do wrong. What then? Does the Judge come and at once summon me before his throne? No, I have no Judge. He is a Father, and that Father brings me up before his face, and frowns on me--nay, takes the rod and begins to scourge me. He never scourged me when he was a Judge. Then, he only threatened to use the axe; but he has buried the axe now. Now that I am his child, he has no axe to put me to death

with--he cannot destroy his own children. But he uses the rod upon me. If I do that which is wrong, as I am doing every day towards him as a father, I am bound to go to him as to a father on a child's knees, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven, forgive me these trespasses as I forgive them that trespass against me." As each day you and I, if we be children of God, are continually sinning, not against him as Judge, but against him as Father, it behoves us to seek daily pardon. If we do not obtain that pardon daily, at last the Father lays on the rod, as he did in Hezekiah's case. He smote Hezekiah till he was sick even to death. Hezekiah repented; the rod was taken away; and then Hezekiah felt in his soul, "Thou hast east all my sin. behind thy back." This was David's case. David's sin with Bathsheba had been forgiven years ago and put away, through the expected blood of Christ. But when he sinned it, God put him away for awhile; took away his presence from him, and as a father was angry against his child. When David, however, repented, after he had been smitten, the Father took him again to his bosom, and David could sing once again, "Thou hast cast my sins behind thy back." Now notice that this pardon differs from the first. The first was the pardon of a Judge: this is the pardon of a rather. The first quenched the flames of hell: this only removes the paternal rod. The first made the rebel into a pardoned criminal, and reversed the sentence: the second receives the erring child more tenderly to a Father's breast. There are essential differences, because the pardon of the second does not relate so much to the punishment and the guilt, as it does, to the root of iniquity within, and the removing of that from which was only cast upon us in order to make us sick of self and fond of Christ. But when this sense of pardon is obtained by the Christian, it gives him a joy; not so tumultuous as the first one he had; but still, and deep, and unruffled, and calm. He does not, perhaps, partake of that roaring

see of rapturous delight on which he sailed when first he was forgiven; but his peace is liken river, and his righteousness like the waves of the sea. And this peace produces in him the most blessed and salutary effects. He becomes grateful to God fur the chastisement he teas received, which taught him his need of Jesus afresh. He henceforth avoids the sins which made him grieve his God. He walks more cautiously and tenderly than he did before; lives nearer to God; cultivates greater acquaintance with the Holy Spirit; is more in prayer, more humble; and yet the same time more confident than he was before. The light wee withdrawn that he might receive a double portion of it by-and-bye. The joy was taken away that his holiness might be increased. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, are you laboring this morning under desertion of soul? Was there a time when you could read your title clear? Have clouds and darkness beset you? Do not doubt your Father's love for all that; do not distrust him; do not go creeping on your knees as you did when you first went, as one who had never received pardon. Come boldly, yet humbly, to your God. Plead his promise; rely upon the precious blood of Christ, and look up and say, "My Father, my Father, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit" And you shall have back the confidence of your youth, and you shall again feel that the Holy Spirit dwells within you. You shall once again mount above the trials and troubles of this mortal life, and begin to enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

One solitary sentence or so, and I will dismiss the present congregation. Have I a man here who declares that he is pardoned, and yet indulges in the sins which he pretends are forgiven? Sir, you have either deceived yourself, or else you are uttering what you know is untrue. He who is forgiven hate' sin. We cannot be washed clean if we

still persist in living up to our neck in filth. It cannot be possible that a man is pardoned while he still continues to wallow in abominable sin. "O yes," but he says, "I am no legalist; I believe the grace of God has made me clean, though I do go on in sin." Sir, it is clear you are a legalist, but I will tell you what else you are: you are no child of God, you are no Christian; for the Christian is a man who uniformly hates sin. There never was a believer who loved iniquity; such a strange thing as a pardoned sinner who still loved to be in rebellion against his God. "Yes," but I hear another say, "Sir, that may be true; but I do not profess to be pardoned in any such way as you speak of. I believe my sins to be so small and little, that I have no need to go seeking mercy; or if I seek it I do not expect that I shall find it here. I dare say I shall fare as well as the best when I go into another world." Poor fool poor fool thou art condemned already. The sentence of God has gone out against you, "Whosoever believeth not on the Son of God is condemned because he believeth not." And yet you, when your sentence is written out, and your death-knell perhaps tolling now, say your ring are little. They are so great, sir, that the fires of hell shall never expiate them, and your own misery, in soul and body for ever, shall never be a full equivalent for the iniquity you have committed against God. And so you don't want to know that you are forgiven, you are consent to take your chance with the rest. A chance, indeed, it is! But know, air, I feel so differently in my heart from you in that respect, that had I a doubt at this time about my sins being forgiven, I could not give sleep to my eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, till I was assured that I had received God's love in my heart. If at any time a doubt crosses my soul, I am the most wretched of beings. For sure, this is like light to the eyes, like friendship to the spirit, like drink to the thirsty, and bread to the hungry, to know

one's-self forgiven. Go out of this hall, and say, "I am walking over the mouth of hell and may slip in at any moment; I am hanging over perdition by a single hair, and into in flame may be speedily hurled, yet I do not care whether I am damned or not." Say it right out in broad English--say you are in doubt as to whether you shall go to heaven or hell--say, if you must go home to day, and in your upper chamber lie down on your narrow bed to die--say you are not sure whether you shall see the face of your God with acceptance, and yet you are content. Speak like an honest man, and like a fool, for such language is only the raving of a madman and a fool. Oh, I beseech you, never be content until you have sought and found a Savior. Ay, and until you are sure you have found him, do not be happy with a "perhaps," or a "perchance." Do not rest your soul on chances, but make sure work for eternity, I conjure you, airs, by the solemnities of eternity, by the fires of hell, and by the joys of heaven, get your foot on a rock, and know it is there. Do not make guesswork of it; put it beyond all chance. O dying sinner! do not let it be a question with you whether thou shalt be saved or whether thou shalt be damned. O frail man! tottering on the brink of the grave, do not let it be a matter of uncertainty as to whether heaven shall receive thee, or hell engulph thee. Be sure of it one way or the other. If thou canst make thy bed in hell, if thou canst endure the everlasting burning, if thou canst suffer the anger of God when he shall rend thee in pieces like a lion, then go on in thy folly. But if thou wouldst have a portion among them that are sanctified. if thou wouldst se the face of Christ and walk the golden streets, be sure that thou art in Christ, be certain that thou art trusting him, and be not satisfied till that is put beyond all question, beyond all argument and contention.

The Lord add his blessing to my feeble words, for Jesu's sake! Amen.

Chapter 30

Characteristics of Faith

A Sermon

(No. 317)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 27th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."--John 4:48.

OU WILL REMEMBER that Luke, in his letter to Theophilus, speaks of things which Jesus began both to do and to teach, as if there was a connection between his doings and his teachings. In fact, there was a relation of the most intimate kind. His teachings were the explanation of his doings--his doings confirmations of his teachings. Jesus Christ had never occasion to any, "Do as I say, but not as I do." His words and his actions were in perfect harmony with one another. You might be sure that he was honest in what he said, because what he did forced that conviction upon your mind. Moreover, you were led to see that what he taught you must be true, because he spoke with authority,--an authority proved and demonstrated by the miracles he wrought. Oh my brethren in Christ! when our biographies shall come to be written at last, God grant that they may not be all sayings, but that they may be a history of our sayings and doings! And may the good Spirit so dwell in us, that at the last it may be seen that our doings did not clash with our sayings! It is one thing to preach, but another thing to practice; and unless preaching and practice go together, the preacher is himself condemned, and his ill practice may be the means of condemning multitudes through his leading them astray. If you make a

profession of being God's servant, live up to that profession, and if you think it necessary to exhort others to virtue, take care that you set the example. You can have no right to teach, if you have not yourself learned the lesson which you would teach to others.

Thus much by way of preface; and now concerning the subject itself. The narrative before us seems to me to suggest three points, and those points each of them triplets. I shall notice in this narrative, first, the three stages of faith, in the second place I shall notice the three diseases to which faith is subject; and then I shall come, in the third place, to ask three questions about your faith.

I. To begin, then, with the first point. It seems to me that we have before us FAITH IN THREE OF ITS STAGES.

Doubtless, the history of faith might with propriety be divided just as accurately into five or six different stages of growth; but our narrative suggests a threefold division, and therefore we stand to that this morning.

There is a nobleman living at Capernaum; he hears a rumor that a celebrated prophet and preacher is continually going through the cities of Galilee and Judea, and is given to understand that this mighty preacher does not merely enthral every hearer by his eloquence, but wins the hearts of men by singularly benevolent miracles which he works as a confirmation of his mission. He stores these things in his heart, little thinking that they would ever be of any practical service to him. It comes to pass on a certain day that his son falls sick,--perhaps his only son, one very dear to his father's heart,--the sickness, instead of diminishing, gradually increases. Fever breathes its hot breath upon the child, and seems to dry up all the moisture in his body, and to blast the bloom from his cheek. The father consults every physician within his reach; they look upon the child and candidly

pronounce him hopeless. No cure can possibly be wrought. That child is at the point of death; the arrow of death has almost sunk into his flesh; it has well nigh penetrated his heart; he is not near death merely, but at death's very point; he has been forced by disease upon the barbed arrows of that insatiate archer. The father now bethinks himself. and calls to recollection the stories he had heard of the cures wrought by Jesus of Nazareth. There is a little faith in his soul; though but a little, still enough to make him use every endeavor to test the truth of what he has heard. Jesus Christ has come to Cana again; it is some fifteen or twenty miles. The father travels with all speed; he arrives at the place where Jesus is: his faith has got to such a stage that, as soon as he sees the master, he begins to cry, "Lord, come down ere my child die." The Master, instead of giving him an answer which might console him, rebukes him for the littleness of his faith, and tells him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." The man, however, pays little regard to the rebuke, for there is a desire which has absorbed all the powers of his soul. His mind is so overwhelmed with one anxiety, that he is oblivious of all beside. "Sir," said he, "come down ere my child die." His faith has now arrived at such a stage that he pleads in prayer, and earnestly importunes the Lord to come and heal his son. The Master looks upon him with an eye of ineffable benevolence, and says to him, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." The father goes his way cheerfully, quickly, contentedly, trusting in the word which as yet no evidence has confirmed. He has now come to the second stage of his faith; he has come out of the seeking stage into the relying stage. He no more cries and pleads for a thing he has not; he trusts and believes that the thing is given to him, though as yet he has not perceived the gift. On his road home, the servants meet him with joyful haste; they say, "Master, thy son liveth." He enquires

quickly at what hour the fever left him. The answer is given him,--about the seventh hour the fever abated; nay, it stayed its course. Then he comes to the third stage. He goes home; he sees his child perfectly restored. The child springs into his arms, covers him with kisses; and when he has held him up again and again to see if he was really the little one that lay so wan, and pale, and sick, he triumphs in a higher sense still. His faith has gone from reliance up to full assurance; and then his whole house believed as well as himself.

I have given you just these outlines of the narrative, that you may see the three stages of faith. Let us now examine each more minutely. When faith begins in the soul, it is but as a grain of mustard seed. God's people are not born giants. They are babes at first; and as they are babes in grace, so their graces are as it were in their infancy. Faith is but as a little child, when first God gives it; or to use another figure, it is not a fire, but a spark, a spark which seems as if it must go out, but which is nevertheless fanned and kept alive until it cometh to a flame, like unto the vehement heat of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. The poor man in the narrative, when he had faith given him, he had it but in a very small degree. It was seeking faith. That is the first stage of faith. Now just notice that this seeking faith excited his activity. As soon as ever God gives a man the seeking faith, he is no more idle about religion, he does not fold his arms with the wicked Antinomian, and cry, "If I am to be saved, I shall be saved, and I will sit still, for if I am to be damned, I shall be damned." He is not careless and indifferent, as he need to be, as to whether he should go up to the house of God or no. He has got seeking faith, and that faith makes him attend the means of grace, leads him to search the Word, leads him to be diligent in the use of every ordained

means of blessing for the soul. There is a sermon to be heard: no matter that there are five miles to walk, seeking faith puts wings upon the feet. There is a congregation where God is blessing souls; the man, if he enters, will probably have to stand in the crowd; but it does not signify, seeking faith gives him strength to bear the uneasiness of his position, for, "Oh," he says, "if I may but hear the Word." See how he leans forward that he may not lose a syllable for, "Perhaps," saith he, "the sentence that I lose may be the very one that I want." How earnest he is that he may not only be sometimes in the house of God, but very often there. He becomes amongst the most enthusiastic of hearers, the most earnest of men that attend that place of worship. Seeking faith gives a man activity.

More than this, seeking faith, though it is very weak in some things, gives a man great power in prayer. How earnest was this nobleman--"Lord, come down ere my child die." Ay, and when seeking faith enters into the soul, it makes a man pray. He is not content now with muttering over a few words when he rises in the morning, and then, half asleep, ringing the same chimes at night when he goes to bed; but he gets away--he steals a quarter of an hour from his business if he can, that he may cry to God in secret. He has not the faith yet which enables him to say, "My sins are forgiven;" but he has faith enough to know that Christ can forgive his sins, and what he wants is that he may know that his sins are really cast behind Jehovah's back. Sometimes this man has no convenience for prayer, but seeking faith will make him pray in a garret, in a hay-loft, in a saw-pit, from behind a hedge, or even walking the street. Satan may throw a thousand difficulties in the way, but seeking faith will compel a man to knock at mercy's door. Now the faith that you have received doth not vet give you peace, it doth not put you where there is no condemnation, but yet it is such a faith,

that if it grows it will come to that. It has but to be nourished, to be cherished, to be exercised, and the little one shall become mighty, seeking faith shall come to a higher degree of development, and you that knocked at mercy's gate shall enter in and find a welcome at Jesus' table.

And I would have you further notice, that the seeking faith in this man's case did not simply make him earnest in prayer, but importunate in it. He asked once, and the only answer he received was an apparent rebuff He did not turn away in a sulk, and say, "He rebukes me." No. "Sir," saith he, " come down ere my child die." I cannot tell you how he said it, but I have no doubt it was expressed in soul-moving terms, with tears starting from his eyes, with hands that were placed together in the attitude of entreaty. He seemed to say, "I cannot let thee go except thou come and save my child. Oh, do come. Is there anything I can say that can induce thee? Let a father's affection be my best argument; and if my lips be not eloquent, let the tears of my eyes supply the place of the words of my tongue. Come down ere my child die." And oh! what mighty prayers those are which seeking faith will make a man pray! I have heard the seeker sometimes plead with God with all the power that Jacob ever could have had at Jabboks brook. I have seen the sinner under distress of soul seem to take hold of the pillars of the gate of mercy and rock them to and fro as though he would sooner pull them up from their deep foundations than go away without effecting an entrance. I have seen him pull and tug, and strive and fight, and wrestle, rather than not enter the kingdom of heaven, for he knew that the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent would take it by force. No wonder that you have not any peace, if you have been bringing before God your cold prayers. Heat them red-hot in the furnace of desire, or think not they will ever burn their way upwards to

heaven. You that merely say in the chill form of orthodoxy, "God be merciful to me a sinner," will never find mercy. It is the man that cries in the burning anguish of heart-felt emotion--"God be merciful to me a sinner; save me or I perish;" that gains his suit. It is he who concentrates his soul in every word, and flings the violence of his being into every sentence, that wins his way through the gates of heaven. Seeking faith when once it is given can make a man do this. Doubtless there are some here who have got as far as that already. I thought I saw the tears starting from many an eye just now brushed away very hastily, but I could see it as an index that some said in their souls, "Ay, I know the meaning of that, and I trust God has brought me thus far."

One word I must say here with regard to the weakness of this seeking faith. It can do much, but it makes many mistakes. The fault of seeking faith is that it knows too little, for you will observe that this poor man said, "Sir, come down, come down." Well, but he need not come down. The Lord can work the miracle without coming down. But our poor friend thought the Master could not save his son, unless he came and looked at him, and put his hand upon him, and knelt down perhaps upon him as Elijah did. "Oh, come down" saith he. So is it with you. You have been dictating to God how he shall save you. You want him to send you some terrible convictions, and then you think you could believe; or else you want to have a dream or a vision, or to hear a voice speaking to you, saying, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." That is your fault you see. Your seeking faith is strong enough to make you pray, but it is not strong enough to cast out of the mind your own silly fancies. You are wanting to see signs and wonders, or else you will not believe. O nobleman, if Jesus chooses to speak the word and thy son is healed, will not that suit thee as well as his coming down? "Oh," saith he, "I

never thought of that?" and so, poor sinner, if Jesus chooses to give thee peace this morning in this hall, will not that suit thee as well as being a month under the whip of the law? If as you pass out of these doors you be enabled simply to trust in Christ, and so find peace, will not that be as good a salvation as though you should have to go through fire and through water, and all your sins should be made to ride over your head? Here, then, is the weakness of your faith. Though there is much excellence in it because it makes you pray, there is some fault in it because it makes you imprudently prescribe to the Almighty how he shall bless you--makes you in effect to impugn his sovereignty, and leads you ignorantly to dictate to him in what form the promised boon shall come.

We will now pass on to the second stage of faith. The Master stretched out his hand and said, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." Do you see the face of that nobleman? Those furrows that were there seem smoothed in a moment, all gone. Those eyes are full of tears, but they are of another sort now--they are tears of joy. He claps his hands, retires silently, his heart ready to burst with gratitude, his whole soul full of confidence. "Why are you so happy, sir?" "Why my child is cured," saith he. "Nay, but you have not seen him cured." "But my Lord said he was, and I believe him." But it may be that when you get home you will find your faith to be a delusion and your child a corpse." "Nay," saith he, "I believe in that man. Once I believed him and sought him, now I believe him and have found him.' "But you have no evidence whatever that your child is healed." "Nay," saith he, "I do not want any. The naked word of that divine prophet is enough for me. He spake it and I know it is true. He told me to go my way; my son lived; I go my way, and I am quite at peace and at ease." Now mark, when your faith gets to a second stage in which you shall be able to take Christ at his word,

then it is you shall begin to know the happiness of believing, and then it is your faith saves your soul. Take Christ at his word, poor sinner. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." "But," saith one, "I feel no evidence." Believe it none the less for that. "But," says another, "I do not feel enjoyment in my heart." Believe it, be your heart never so gloomy: that enjoyment shall come afterwards. That is an heroic faith which believes Christ in the teeth of a thousand contradictions. When the Lord gives you that faith, you can say, "I consult not with flesh and blood. He who said to me, 'Believe and be saved,' gave me grace to believe, and I therefore am confident that I am saved. When I once cast my soul, sink or swim, upon the love and blood and power of Christ, though conscience give no witness to my soul, though doubts distress me and fears plague me, yet it is mine to honor my Master by believing his Word, though it be contradictory to sense, though reason rebel against it, and present feeling dare to give it the lie." Oh! it is an honorable thing when a man has a follower, and that follower believes that man implicitly. The man propounds an opinion which is in contradiction to the received opinion of the universe, he stands up and addresses it to the people, and they hiss and hoot, and scorn him; but that man has one disciple, who says, "I believe my Master; what he has said I believe is true." There is something noble about the man who receives such homage as that. He seems to say, "Now I am master of one heart at least," and when you, in the teeth of everything that is conflicting, stand to Christ and believe his words, you do him greater homage than Cherubim and Seraphim before the throne. Dare to believe; trust Christ, I say, and thou art saved.

In this stage of faith it is that a man begins to enjoy quietness and peace of mind. I am not quite certain as to the number of miles between

Cana and Capernaum, but several excellent expositors say it is fifteen, some twenty. I suppose the miles may have altered in their length lately. It need not, however, have taken this good man long to get home to his son. It was at the seventh hour that the Master said, "Thy son liveth." It is evident from this text, that he did not meet his servants till the next day, because they say, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." What do you conclude from that? Why I draw this inference: the nobleman was so sure that that his child was alive and well, that he was in no violent hurry to return. He did not go home immediately, as though he must be in time to get another doctor, if Christ had not succeeded; but he went his way leisurely and calmly, confident in the truth of what Jesus had said to him. Well says an old father of the church, "He that believeth shall not make haste." In this case it was true. The man took his time. He was, it may be, twelve hours or more before he reached his home--though probably it was but fifteen miles for him to travel. He who takes the naked word of Christ to be the basis of his hope, stands on a rock while all other ground is sinking sand. My brothers and sisters, some of you have got as far as this. You are now taking Christ at his word; it shall not be long before you will get to the third and best stage of faith. But if it should be ever so long still stand here; still believe your Lord and Master, still trust him. If he does not take you into his banqueting house, still trust him. Nay, if he locks you up in the castle, or in the dungeon, still trust him. Say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Should he let the arrows of affliction stick fast in your flesh, still trust him; should he break you to pieces with his right hand still trust him; and by-and-bye your righteousness shall come forth as the light, your glory as a lamp that burneth.

We must now hurry on to the third and best stage of faith. The servants

meet the nobleman--his son is healed. He arrives at home, clasps his child and sees him perfectly restored. Add now, says the narrative--"Himself believed and his whole house.' And yet you will have noticed that in the fiftieth verse, it says that he believed. "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him." Now some expositors have been greatly puzzled; for they did not know when this man did believe. Good Calvin says, and his remarks are always weighty, and always excellent--(I do not hesitate to say that Calvin is the grandest expositor that ever yet thought to make plain the Word of God; in his commentary I have often found him cutting his own institutes to pieces, not attempting to give a passage a Calvinistic meaning, but always trying to interpret God's Word as he finds it)--Calvin says this man had in the first place, only a faith, which relied for one thing upon Christ. He believed the word Christ had spoken. Afterwards he had a faith which took Christ into his soul, to become his disciple, and trust him as the Messiah. I think I am not wrong in using this as an illustration of faith in its highest state. He found his son healed at the very hour when Jesus said he should be. "And now," he says, "I believe;" that is to say, be believed with full assurance of faith. His mind was so rid of all its doubts; he believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God, sure he was a prophet sent from God, and doubts and misgivings no longer occupied his soul. Ah! I know many poor creatures who want to get up to this state, but they want to get there all at first They are like a man who wants to get up a ladder without going up the lowest rounds. "Oh," they say, "if I had the full assurance of faith, then I should believe I am a child of God." No no, believe, trust in Christ's naked word, and then you shall come afterwards to feel in your soul the witness of the Spirit that you are born of God. Assurance is a flower--you must plant the bulb first, the naked,

perhaps unseemly bulb of faith--plant it in the grain, and you shall have the flower by-and-bye. The shrivelled seed of a little faith springs upwards, and then you have the ripe corn in the ear of full assurance of faith. But here I want you to notice that when this man came to full assurance of faith, it is said his house believed too. There is a text often quoted, and I do not think I have heard it quoted rightly yet. By the way, there are some people who know no more of authors than what they hear quoted, and some who know no more of the Bible than what they have heard quoted too. Now, there is that passage, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"--What have the last three words done that they should be cut off?--"And thy house;" those three words seem to me to be as precious as the first. "Believe and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Does the father's faith save the family? Yes! No!--Yes it does. in some way; namely, that the father's faith makes him pray for his family, and God hears his prayer, and the family is saved. No, the father's faith cannot be a substitute for the faith of the children, they must believe too. In both senses of the word, I say "Yes, or No." When a man has believed, there is hope that his children will be saved. Nay, there is a promise; and the father ought not to rest satisfied until he sees all his children saved. If he does, he has not believed right yet. There are many men who only believe for themselves. I like, if I get a promise, to believe it as broad as it is. Why should not my faith be as broad as the promise? Now, thus it stands, "Believe and thou shalt be saved, and thy house! "I have a claim on God for my little ones. When I go before God in prayer, I can plead, "Lord, I believe, and thou hast said I shall be saved, and my house; thou hast saved me, but thou best not fulfilled thy promise fill thou hast saved my house too." I know it is sometimes thought that we who believe that the baptism of infants is

heresy, and not a single text of Scripture gives it so much as an inferential support, neglect our children. But could there have been a greater slander? Why instead thereof we think we are doing our children the greatest service that we can possibly do them, when teaching them that they are not members of Christ's church, that they are not made Christians in the day that they are christened, that they must be born again, and that that new birth must be in them a thing which they can consciously realize, and not a thing we can do for them in their babyhood, while they are yet in their long clothes, by sprinkling a handful of water in their faces. We think they are far more likely to be converted than those who are brought up in the delusive notion taught them in that expression of the catechism--a most wicked, blasphemous, and false expression--"In my baptism wherein I was made a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The Pope of Rome never uttered a sentence more unholy than that, never said a syllable more contradictory to the whole tenor of God's Word. Children are not saved by baptism, nor grown-up people either. "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth and shall be saved,"--but the baptism precedes not the belief. Nor doth it co-act or co-work in our salvation, for salvation is a work of grace, laid hold of by faith and faith alone. Baptized or unbaptized, if you believe not, you are lost; but unbaptized, if you believe you are saved. And our children dying in their infancy without any unhallowed or superstitious rite, are saved notwithstanding.

II. And now we come to the second department of our subject, the THREE DISEASES TO WHICH FAITH IS VERY SUBJECT, and these three diseases break out in different stages.

First with regard to seeking faith. The power of seeking faith lies in its driving a man to prayer And here is the disease; for we are very

likely, when we are seeking to begin, to suspend prayerfulness. How often does the devil whisper in a man's ear, "Do not pray, it is of no use. You know you will be shut out of heaven!" Or, when the man thinks he has got an answer to prayer, then Satan says, "You need not pray any more, you have got what you asked for." Or, if after a month of crying he has received a blessing, then Satan whispers, "Fool that thou art to tarry at Mercy's gate! Get gone! get gone! That gate is up and barred fast, and you will never be heard." O my friends! if you are subject to this disease while seeking Christ, I bid you cry against it, and labor against it; never cease to pray. A man can never sink in the river of wrath so long as ever be can cry. So long as ever you can cry to God for mercy, mercy shall never withdraw itself from you.

Oh! let not Satan push you back from the closet door, but push in, whether he will or not. Give up prayer, and you seal your own damnation; renounce secret supplication, and you renounce Christ and heaven. Continue in prayer, and though the blessing tarry, it must come; in God's own time it must appear to you.

The disease which is most likely to fall upon those in the second stage,--namely, those who are trusting implicitly on Christ,--is the disease of wanting to see signs and wonders, or else they will not believe. In the early stage of my ministry, in the midst of a rural population, I used to meet continually with persons who thought they were Christians because, as they imagined, they had seen signs and wonders and since then, stories the most ridiculous have been told me by earnest and sincere people, as reasons why they thought they were saved. I have heard a narrative something like this:--"I believe my sins are put away." Why? "Well, sir, I was down in the back garden and I saw a great cloud, and I thought, now God can make that cloud go away if he pleases, and it did go away; and I thought the cloud and my sins

were gone too, and I have not had a doubt since then." I have thought, Well, you have good reason to doubt, for that is totally absurd. Were I to tell you the whims and fancies that some people get into their heads, you might smile, and that might not be to your profit. Certain it is that men patch up any idle story, any strange fancy, in order to make them think that they may then trust Christ. Oh! my dear friends, if you have no better reason to believe you are in Christ than a dream or a vision, it is time you began again. I grant you there have been some who have been alarmed, convinced, and perhaps converted, by strange freaks of their imagination, but if you rely on these as being pledges from God, if you look on these as being evidences that you are saved, I tell you that you will be resting on a dream, a delusion. You may as well seek to build a castle in the air, or a house upon the sands. No, he who believes Christ, believes Christ because he says it, and because here it is written in the Word, he does not believe it because he dreamed it, or because he heard a voice that might probably be a blackbird singing, or because he thought he saw an angel in the sky, which was just as likely to be mist of a peculiar shape as anything else. No, we must have done with this desire to see signs and wonders. If they come, be thankful: if they come not, trust simply in the Word which says, "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men." I do not wish to say this to hurt any tender conscience, which conscience may perhaps have found some little comfort in such singular wonders, but I only say this honestly, lest any of you should be deceived: I do solemnly warn you to place no reliance whatever on anything you think you have seen, or dreamed, or heard. This volume is the sure word of testimony, unto which ye do well if ye take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place. Trust in the Lord; wait patiently for him; cast all thy confidence where he put all thy sins, namely, upon Christ

Jesus alone, and thou shalt be saved, with or without any of these signs and wonders.

I am afraid some Christians in London have fallen into the same error of wanting to see signs and wonders. They have been meeting together in special prayer-meetings to seek for a revival; and because people have not dropped down in a fainting fit, and have not screamed and made a noise, perhaps they have thought the revival has not come. Oh that we had but eyes to see God's gifts in the way God chooses to give them! We do not want the revival of the North of Ireland, we want the revival in its goodness, but not in that particular shape. If the Lord sends it in another, we shall be all the more glad to be without these exceptional works in the flesh. Where the Spirit works in the soul, we are always glad to see true conversion, and if he chooses to work in the body too in London, we shall be glad to see it. If men's hearts are renewed, what matter it though they do not scream out. If their consciences are quickened, what matters it though they do not fall into a fit; if they do but find Christ, who is to regret that they do not be for five or six weeks motionless and senseless. Take it without the signs and wonders. For my part I have no craving for them. Let me see God's work done in God's own way--a true and thorough revival, but the signs and wonders we can readily dispense with, for they are certainly not demanded by the faithful, and they will only be the laughing-stock of the faithless.

Having thus spoken of these two diseases, I will only just mention the other. There is a third then, which lies in the way of our attaining the highest degree of faith, namely, full assurance, and that is, want of observation. The nobleman in our text made careful enquiries about the day and the hour when his son was healed. It was by that he obtained his assurance. But we do not observe God's hand as much as we

should. Our good puritanic forefathers, when it rained, used to say, that God had unstopped the bottles of heaven. When it rains now-a-days, we think the clouds have become condensed. If they had a field of hay out, they used to plead of the Lord that he would bid the sun shine. We, perhaps, are wiser as we think; and we consider it hardly worth while to pray about such things, thinking they will come in the course of nature. They believed that God was in every storm, nay, in every cloud of dust. They used to speak of a present God in everything; but we speak of such things as laws of nature, as if laws were ever anything, except there was some one to carry them out, and some secret power to set the whole machine in motion. We do not get our assurance, because we do not observe enough. If you were to watch providential goodness day-by-day, if you noticed the answers to your prayers; if you would just put down somewhere in the book of your remembrance, God's continued mercies towards you, I do think you would become like this father who was led to fall assurance of faith, because he noticed that the very hour when Jesus spoke, was the very hour when the healing came. Be watchful, Christian. He that looks for providences will never lack a providence to look at.

Take heed then of these three diseases; of ceasing from prayer; waiting to see signs and wonders, and neglect of observing the manifest hand of God.

III. And now I come to my third and last head, upon which solemnly, though briefly, there are THREE QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO YOU ABOUT YOUR FAITH.

First, then, thou sayest, "I have faith." Be it so. There be many a man who saith he hath gold that hath it not, there be many that think themselves rich and increased in goods, that are naked, and poor, and miserable. I say unto thee, therefore, in the first place, does thy

faith make thee pray? Not the praying of the man who prates like a parrot the prayers he has learned; but dost thou cry the cry of a living child? Dost thou tell to God thy wants and thy desires? And dost thou seek his face, and ask his mercy? Man, if thou invest without prayer, thou art a Christless soul; thy faith is a delusion, and thy confidence which results from it, is a dream that will destroy thee. Wake up out of thy death-like slumbers; for as long as thou art dumb in prayer, God cannot answer thee. Thou shalt not live to God, if thou dost not live in the closet, he that is never on his knees on earth shall never stand upon his feet in heaven; he that never wrestles with the angel here below, shall never be admitted into heaven by that angel above. I know I speak to some to-day that are prayerless ones. You have plenty of time for your counting-house, but you have none for your closet. Family prayer you have never had; but] will not talk to you about that. Private prayer you have neglected. Do you not sometimes rise in the morning so near the time when you must keep your appointments, that--you do kneel it is true, but where is the prayer? And as to any extra occasions of supplication, why, you never indulge yourselves in them. Prayer with you is a sort of luxury too dear to indulge in often. Ah! but he who has true faith in his heart, is praying all day long. I do not mean that he is on his knees; but often when he is bargaining, when he is in his shop, or in his counting-house, his heart finds a little space, a vacuum for a moment. and up it leaps into the bosom of its God, and it is down again, refreshed to go about its business and meet the face of man. Oh! those ejaculatory prayers--not merely filling the censer in the morning with incense, but that casting in of little bits of cinnamon and frankincense all day long, so as always to keep it fresh--that is the way to live, and that is the life of a true genuine believer. If your

faith does not make you pray, have nothing to do with it get rid of it, and God help thee to begin again.

But thou sayest, "I have faith." I will ask thee a. second question. Does that faith make thee obedient? Jesus said to the nobleman, "Go thy way," and he went without a word, however much he might have wished to stay and listen to the Master, he obeyed. Does your faith make you obedient? In these days we have specimens of Christians of the most sorry, sorry kind; men that have not common honesty. I have heard it observed by tradesmen, that they know many men that have not the fear of God before their eyes, that are most just and upright men in their dealings; and on the other hand, they know some professing Christians who are not positively dishonest, but they can back and hedge a little; they are not horses that will not go, but every now and then they jib; they do not seem to keep up to the time if they have a bill to pay; they are not regular, they are not exact; in fact sometimes--and who shall hide what is true?--you catch Christians doing dirty actions, and professors of religion defiling themselves with acts which merely worldly men would scorn. Now, sirs, I bear my testimony this morning as God's minister, too honest to alter a word to please any man that lives, you are no Christian if you can act in business beneath the dignity of an honest man. If God has not made you honest, he has not saved your soul. Rest assured that if you can go on, disobedient to the moral laws of God, if your life is inconsistent and lascivious, if your conversation is mixed up with things which even a worldling might reject, the love of God is not in you. I do not plead for perfection, but I do plead for honesty; and if your religion has not made you careful and prayerful in common life; if you are not in fact made a new creature in Christ Jesus; your faith is but an empty name, as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

I will ask you one more question about your faith, and I have done. Thou sayest, "I have faith." Has thy faith led thee to bless thy household? Good Rowland Hill once said, in his own quaint way, that when a man became a Christian, his dog and his cat ought to be the better for it, and I think it was Mr. Jay who always would say that a man when he became a Christian, was better in every relation. He was a better husband, a better master, a better father, than he was before, or else his religion was not genuine. Now, have you ever thought, my dear Christian brethren and sisters, about blessing your household? Do I hear one saying, "I keep my religion to myself?" Do not be very anxious about its ever being stolen, then; you need not put it under lock and key; there is not enough to tempt the devil himself to come and take it from you. A man who can keep his godliness to himself has so small a proportion of it, I am afraid it will be no credit to himself, and no blessing to other people. But you do sometimes, strange to say, meet with fathers that do not seem as if they interested themselves in their children's salvation any more than they do about poor children in the back slum. of St. Giles's. They would like to see the boy put out well, and they would like to see the girl married comfortably; but as to their being converted, it does not seem to trouble their head. It is true the father occupies his seat in a house of worship, and sits down with a community of Christians; and he hopes his children may turn out well. They have the benefit of his hope--certainly a very large legacy: he will no doubt when he dies leave them his best wishes, and may they grow rich upon them! But he never seems to have made it a matter of anxiety of soul, as to whether they shall be saved or not. Out upon such a religion as that! Cast it on the dunghill; hurl it to the dogs; let it be buried like Koniah, with the burial of an ass; cast it without the camp, like an unclean

thing. It is not the religion of God. He that careth not for his own household, is worse than a heathen man and a publican.

Never be content, my brethren in Christ, till all your children are saved. Lay the promise before your God. The promise is unto you and unto your children. The Greek word does not refer to infants, but to children, grand-children, and any descendants you may have, whether grown up or not. Do not cease to plead, till not only your children but your great grand-children, if you have such, are saved. I stand here today a proof that God is not untrue to his promise. I can cast my eye back through four or five generations, and see that God has been pleased to hear the prayers of our grandfather's grandfather, who used to supplicate with God that his children might live before him to the last generation, and God has never deserted the house, but has been pleased to bring first one and then another to fear and love his name. So be it with you: and in asking this you are not asking more than God is bound to give you. He cannot refuse unless he run back from his promise. He cannot refuse to give you both your own and your children's souls as an answer to the prayer of your faith. "Ah," says one, "but you do not know what children mine are." No, my dear friend, but I know that if you are a Christian, they are children that God has promised to bless. "O but they are such unruly ones, they break my heart." Then pray God to break their hearts, and they will not break your hearts any more. "But they will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." Pray God then that he may bring their eyes with sorrow to prayer, and to supplication, and to the cross, and then they will not bring you to the grave. "But," you say, "my children have such hard hearts." Look at your own. You think they cannot be saved: look at yourselves, he that saved you can save them. Go to him in prayer, and say, "Lord, I will not let thee go except thou bless me;" and if thy child be at the point

of death, and, as you think, at the point of damnation on account of sin, still plead like the nobleman, "Lord, come down ere my child perish, and save me for thy mercy's sake." And oh, thou that dwellest in the highest heavens thou wilt never refuse thy people. Be it far from us to dream that thou wilt forget thy promise. In the name of all thy people we put our hand upon thy Word most solemnly, and pledge thee to thy covenant. Thou hast said thy mercy is unto the children's children of them that fear thee and that keep thy commandments. Thou hast said the promise is unto us and unto our children; Lord, thou wilt not run back from thine own covenant; we challenge thy word by holy faith this morning--"Do as thou hast said."

Chapter 31

High Doctrine

A Sermon

(No. 318)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, June 3rd, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

TO THE READERS OF THE PARK STREET PULPIT

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

Incessant labour has so completely wearied me, that I am compelled to retire for a few weeks from active service. The great Master bade his disciples to "go into the desert and rest awhile," and I feel that I should be acting in opposition to the warnings of Providence in my mental and physical frame if I did not seek repose. During my absence I shall continue to address you through the evening sermons, which are richer and more full of doctrinal truth than those of the morning. If the sermons addressed to the mixed assemblies of Exeter Hall have been in any measure profitable to you, I am full well assured that the evening sermons to the church of God will not fail, under the divine blessing, to edify you far more.

I shall hope to write a few lines to you, which will be appended to my weekly sermon, that the links of our communion may not be broken, and that I may have the opportunity of begging your daily prayers. The Lord bless you and preserve you until the day of His appearing.

I am, yours in Jesus, Clapham, Monday, June 4th, 1860

C. H. Spurgeon.

"And all things are of God."--2 Corinthians. 5.18.

I WOULD HAVE YOU look on this text as being a summary of all the things

which we have preached to you these years. It has been my endeavour, constantly and continually, to maintain that salvation is of God's good will, and not of man's free will; that man is nothing, and that Jesus Christ is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And I think I may truly say, "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum"--"all things are of God." And oh my brethren, what a large summary it is! it contains words which grasp the compass of everything that your mind can think upon--"all things;" and it proclaims him to whom all things owe their being--"God." Grasp this total if you are able, "All things!" What is here omitted? Surely whatsoever the Christian can desire is to be found in those words "all things." But lest even that should not be comprehensive enough, our summary contains a still greater word, one which is supreme over all, inasmuch as all things spring from his loins, and yet he remaineth still the same, as full as ever. "All things are of God." If we be thirsty, here are streams that never can be exhausted. If we be hungry, surely here is bread enough and to spare. If we be poor, here are treasures and riches that are utterly inexhaustible, for here we have all things, and all things in God.

I shall hope this morning to do two things; first, to lay down clearly and distinctly, the doctrine of this sentence, and then secondly, to shew the excellent practical tendency of such doctrine.

I. To begin with THE DOCTRINE ITSELF:--"All things are of God." In enlarging upon that doctrine, I shall have need to sub-divide it, taking it first as to what, and then as to how, and then as to why.

"All things are of God!" What is meant here by the term, "all things?" The reply is to be found in the context--all things of the new creation are of God. It is not necessary for us to remind you that all the things of the old creation are of God. None but the infidel will ever

for a moment affirm, that there is anything which exist, apart from the Creator. We believe that he hath laid the beams of his chambers in the waters, he hath spread out the heavens like a tent to dwell in, the isles have been created by his hand, and the winds still are, as they ever were, under his guidance and control; nothing is, and nothing shall be, but that which he ordains, determines, and supports.

Concerning the matter of the new creation, it is wonderful that there ever should have been any controversy. Do we call that man an infidel who should teach that some things of the old creation were of man? What name shall I give to the being who will dare to say that anything in the new creation of grace is of man? Surely if the first be an heresy, the second must be an heresy equally damnable, and perhaps more so. For the one doth but touch the external works of God, while the other thrusts its sacrilegious hand into the internal works of his grace, plucks the brightest jewel from his crown, and treads it in the dust.

We hold, and ever must maintain, that all things, without exception, in the new creation, are of God, and of God alone.

"What things?" do you say again. We answer, all things that refer to the new nature--all things that refer to our new privileges and to our new actions--whatsoever things refer to the new nature are of God. The personal desire after Christ which is found in the sinner's contrite heart is of God. The first new hope which gilds the darkness of the poor benighted mind is of God. The first glimpse of new faith, when that man turns his eye to the Saviour, is of God. The first beginnings of divine love in the soul are of God. Leave men to themselves, and the corruption of their nature may fester, and rot, and breed the fungus of a vile imagination. But the life of God never yet sprung naturally from a dead heart. Whatsoever thing is good in its beginning, as well as in its perfecting, "cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no

variableness, neither shadow of turning." Some seem to teach, that man is to take the first step in salvation, and God will take the rest. No, sirs, if man can take the first, he can take the last, and take the whole. If man, dead in trespasses and sins, can quicken himself, he certainly can maintain the life of which he is himself the author. If man, corrupt, debased, and cast away from God, can say, unawakened by grace, "I will repent, I will change my ways and turn to God." and if he can carry out that resolution to himself, and by his own unaided mind, then there is no room for God in salvation at all. Let man have the whole of it, and let him have all the glory. But know thou my hearer, if thou hast but one good thought in thy heart it is of God; if there be a something which says to thee, "Arise and go to thy Father," that voice is God's voice. If thy bowels begin to yearn towards the Father, whom thou hast angered and aggrieved, and if thy feet desire to leave the mountains of sin and vanity, and to tread the right road, it is a Father's hand that draws thee, it is a Saviour's voice that sweetly impels thee to seek his face, for " All things are of God." Everything moreover with regard to the new nature is of God, not merely as to its first implanting, but as to its subsequent outworking and full development. Has the believer strength--it is of God. Does he stand, and is he kept from falling--his standing is of God. Is he preserved in the midst of temptation true to his covenant, and does he stand in the day of trial firm to his Master--his integrity is of God. There is nothing in him by nature apart from God, which is not vile and deceitful. "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." If there be anything good in my nature, if I have been transformed by the renewing of my mind, if I am regenerate, if I have passed from death unto life, if I have been taken out of the family of Satan, and adopted into the family of God's dear Son, and if I am now no more an heir of

wrath, but a child of heaven, then all these things are of God, and in no sense, and in no degree whatever are they of myself.

Still further, as the new nature is of God, so the new privileges of the new nature are all of God; and what are these? Rich and precious assuredly they are. There is pardon, the washing away of all my sins, and who shall say that is not of God? There is justification, the being robed about with a snow-white garment, which shall make me meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, and is not that of God ? There is sanctification, which cuts out the very root of sin, and treads the old Adam-nature beneath the feet of the new-born babe in Christ; is not that of God? There is the privilege of adoption, which the Father has given to as many as believe on his only begotten Son, that they may have power to become the sons of God. O Lord, surely this adoption is of thee! There is communion, by which through Christ Jesus we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. But whoever dared to think of communion apart from the unspeakable grace of the Most High? I am sure, my brethren, you who have traced the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of covenant mercies and covenant privileges, have never yet met with a single privilege which was not of God. You have walked the broad acres of God's rich grace, but you have not seen there a plant or a flower which was not of his sowing and of his rearing.

When you have gone into the treasure house, and have taken down those shoes of iron and of brass, and that helmet of proof, that sword of steel, when you have laid hold upon that crown of eternal life that fadeth not away, you have been constrained joyfully to confess that all these things are of God. You cannot imagine such a thing as a single boon of grace, a single gift of mercy, which is of yourselves and not of God.

Once again, to conclude this summary, all the actions of the new nature

are of God. See yonder missionary, leaving house and home, and all the comforts of his native land, to go and do battle for Christ among a people who will scorn him, mistrust his motives, and repay his self-denial with persecution. Do you see him with his life in his hand venturing even unto death? That man, oppressed with fever incidental to the land in which he has come to live, as he lies on his bed, with a melancholy interval for reflection, never repents of the step which he has taken. He recovers strength enough to crawl out beneath a tree and there he stands, and instead of recanting the vows he made of dedication to his Master, he confirms them yet afresh, by once again preaching the Word. He continues to labour until worn out, he commits his body to the earth far from his father-land and the homestead of his native land, a witness against the unbelievers, that God hath sent the gospel to them. Shall we applaud the man? Shall we with clamorous songs sing his praise? Let us give him his meed of tribute; he hath done valiantly. But let us remember that everything in him that was good, was of God. He would have been idle and indifferent, and careless to the souls of men had not God made him what he was. Does the martyr burn at the stake? Does the confessor lie and rot in the dungeon? Does the heroic child of God do battle against the current of his times, and seem to stem the flood with his own strong arm? Are Christians prepared to suffer contumely and scorn, and rebuke and reproof, for Jesus' sake ? Surely all these things are of God. Is there a Christian munificent, generous, thoughtful of the woes of others? Is there another mighty in prayer and diligent in service? Can you meet with a third who lives so near to Christ that his face seems to shine with the lustre of Jesus' love,--all these things are of God. Set down no virtue to man. Good things are exotics in the human heart. They are not like the weeds which spring up naturally in such poor soil as human hearts are made

of, but they are rare choice flowers brought down of the Spirit's hand from above and then planted in this unkindly soil. Oh! let us ever know that anything, we can ever do or feel or think that is right, is of God. My brethren, discard for ever with detestation and abhorrence any doctrine which would lead you to think that any work, or grace, anything just, pure, lovely, or of good report, in man, is of man himself. Depend upon it, though it come to you in the garb of earnestness, and paint its cheeks, and look fair enough to you, it is the harlot of Popery in another dress. Only let such doctrine be pushed to its fair conclusion, and you come at once to salvation by works. Ever stand by the good old Calvinistic banner, the banner which Augustine waved of old, and which Paul handed down to us direct from our master Jesus; and hold, believe, and affirm, never swerving from it, that all things in the new creation are of God.

2. But the second division of the doctrine was to be How! How and in what respect are all things of God? All things in the new creation are of God in the planning. God from before all worlds planned the new creation with as much exactitude and wisdom as he did the old. There are some men who seem to think that God does his work bit by bit; altering and making additions as he goes on. They cannot believe that God had a plan ; they believe that the most ordinary architect on earth has prefigured to himself some idea of what he meant to build, though it were but a mud cottage, but the Most High God, who created the heavens and the earth, when he says, " Behold I make a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," hath no plan but what is left to the caprice of manhood; he is to have no decrees, no purposes, no determinations, but men are to do as they will, and so virtually man is to usurp the place of God, and God is to become the dependant of man. Nay, my brethren, in all the work of salvation, God is the sole

and supreme designer. He planned the time when, and the manner how, each of his people should be brought to himself; he did not leave the number of his saved ones to chance, or to what was worse than chance--to the depraved will of man; he did not leave the choice of the persons to mere accident, but on the stones of the eternal breastplate of the great High Priest he engraved the names of those he chose. He did not leave so much as one tent-pin, one single line or yard of canvas to be afterwards arranged; the whole of the tabernacle was given by pattern in the holy mount. In the building of the temple of grace every stone was squared and chiselled in the eternal decree, its place ordained and settled, nor shall that stone be dug from its quarry till the hour ordained, nor shall it be placed in any other position than that which God, after the counsel of his own will hath ordained. Everything in the new creation is of God in the planning.

Alas for us, however. if God had simply planned and left the execution to us! Everything in the new creation is of God in the purchase, and of God in the procuring. One price hath bought his people: that price--the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who contributed so much as a mite to that wealth of treasure which bought our souls? Did he not tread the wine-press alone? Had his people a part in enduring the load, the intolerable load of guilt that overwhelmed our suffering Lord, when he his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree? What arm helped him, or what other foot but his did tread the foeman down? Nay, O Lord! thou hast redeemed us by thy blood; we have not contributed thereto; thou art Alpha and Omega in this, and unto thee be all the honour.

And as it was of God in the planning, and of God in the purchasing, so it is all of God in the applying and bringing of it home to each individual conscience. The cross of Christ is not put up there merely for every man to look at, and then left to chance as to whether men

will look or no. There stands the cross free to every soul that lives, but, nevertheless, God has determined that it shall not be neglected. There is a number that no man can number, who shall by all-constraining grace be brought to clasp that cross as the hope of their souls. Jesus shall not die in vain, and that because God will make men willing in the day of his power. They are hardened; he can break their hearts: they are stubborn; he can bend their knees; they will not come; but he can make them come. He hath a key that can wind up the human heart, and make it run at his pleasure. Think not that man is an independent being, so free that God cannot control him; that were to make man God, deify humanity, and undeify the Godhead. Man is free to be responsible, but he is not free from a perpetual bias and inclination to evil. But man is subject to the restraint or the constraint of God. If he doeth right, then it is God's constraint, and not his free-will. When he doeth wrong, God hath left him to himself; but as sure as ever he doeth good, it is because a Master-hand hath got him now. Man by nature is as a wild horse dashing yonder to the precipice; if he be restrained in his course and turn thitherward away from danger, it is because he hath a mighty rider, and one that knows how to pull the bit and guide him as be pleases; and though he kick and plunge, and long to turn away, his rider can pull him up upon his very haunches, and turn him round, and make him go as He wills, and lead him as He pleases. In this matter is it true that all the bringing home of the gospel to the soul of man is of God.

Nor is this all. The works of the new creation are of God, not only in the planning, procuring, and applying, but in the maintaining of them. Leave the Christian to himself to maintain the grace already begun, and he is gone. The candle is alight, but the devil's breath would blow it out. The gas is burning--cut the connection between it and the great

gasometer, and the light is quenched. The Christian lives, but it is because Christ lives, and because he is one with Christ. O Lord, if thou shouldst cease to send forth the streams of thy grace, thy glorious Church, with all her beauty, must be as a fading flower; all her strength would be fainting weakness, and she herself, though she be as a tower in her glory, must crumble down to the very earth, and lie with the base stones of the valley. All is of grace then, and all of God, in the maintaining.

Still more must it be all of grace in the completing. When you and I shall go up the celestial hills to the gates of Paradise, those last steps shall be of God as much as the first steps. And when we shall stand upon the golden streets, and wear the white robe, I am sure we shall not have a word to sing about free-will, or about self, but our cry will be, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood"--unto him be all the glory for ever. Men may hold what doctrine they like on earth, they cannot hold any doctrine in heaven but that of free. rich, and sovereign grace. The song never was divided yet, and it never will be. There shall be no selfishness to mar its melody, but every heart shall send forth the same melodious notes of music, and every tongue shall mingle in the same undivided song--"Thou hast done it; O Lord, thou hast done it--

'Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.'"

3. My third point upon the doctrine was to be the "Why." Why is it that "all things are of God?" How can we clearly see this? I shall use no arguments but such as would be manifest and palpable to us all. Everything in grace must be of God because we are quite clear there

cannot be anything of man. Man is in such a position that there can be nothing of him. Lazarus was laying a corpse in his tomb; he comes forth quickened; the grave clothes are taken from him; he lives, he breathes; do tell me that his resurrection was in part owing to himself? Well, sir, your mind must be strangely deluded indeed. What could that dead man do towards his own. resurrection? Surely it must be a fact in philosophy which might strike every rational man, that that which does not exist, cannot put itself into existence. And so my new nature which did not exist before God gave it to me, could not bring itself into being. And yet you say a dead man makes himself alive, or at least does something towards it. Oh, sir, you cannot mean it; you cannot mean it. To reason with you were ridiculous. You must feel that if a man be dead there is nothing he can do; it must be a work of some superior power that can give him life. So with the sinner dead in sin, what can that sinner do? Unless the Scripture be an exaggeration, unless you are prepared to cast overboard that passage where we are spoken of as being dead in trespasses and sins, I cannot see how you can dream that man is capable of doing anything in the work of grace. He may work when God sets him working, and he will; he may move when God gives him power to move, and move he will then with joyful alacrity, but till then--

"How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of her load,
The heart unchanged can never rise
To happiness and God."

Till the stone shall of itself fly upwards towards the sun, till the sea shall of itself beget fire, and until fire shall by its own nature distil the shower from its own bowels, then and not till then shall depraved humanity breathe goodness within itself. It must be grace; it must be grace alone.

Let me give you another reason why we are quite sure that all things in the work of grace are of God. It is expressly told us that every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh from above. Now, that word "every " is very comprehensive; it does not exclude a single case. Is there any good gift? I am not told that some good gifts, and some perfect gifts are from above, but every one; and I am quite sure this rule must apply to any good gift you have--any good gift in fact, that is in the heart of any man living upon the face of the earth. God were only in part the Father of lights, if there were light streaming from somewhere else; God were only in part the world's benefactor, if there were other fountains out of which the world could draw, and other helpers who could raise up souls to heaven.

Yet again, we are quite certain that all things are of God, because all the glory is God's. Now, if all the glory be God's it stands to reason that the work must have been his; for where the work is, there must be the merit. If man hath done it, man can claim the honour. If I have been my own Saviour, I will claim the honour and the dignity; and nothing but superior force can wrest from me the glory which I deserve. But if God hath done it, and if I must feel that I have been passive in his hands until he made me active, then must I lay all my honours at his feet, and crown him Lord of all. I am quite certain we do not differ here about God's having all the honour, and yet if we should differ about his doing all the work, we might have fair ground on which to dispute his right to take all the glory.

Oh, men and brethren, if I want argument, your own experience shall bear witness. You as Christians are compelled to feel--"Thou hast wrought all our works in us." You can say, "We are his workmanship, created of God in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."Set it down then for a

certainty--I have tried to explain it as best I can--"All things are of God." Grasp every mercy of the covenant, and every blessing of grace, but say that all things in all senses, are wholly and entirely of God, the great giver of all.

II. And now I am proposing in the second part of my subject, briefly, to show THE EXCELLENT TENDENCIES OF THIS DOCTRINE.

There is one thing about the doctrines of the gospel which to my mind always commends them, they always enlist the attention of men, and rouse them to think. If you hear a sermon in which God's grace is magnified, you are perhaps offended you are angry because the doctrinal sentiments are not in keeping with your own carnal pride. For you to be angry is one of the healthiest things that can happen to you. Do not imagine that the sermon has been wasted when it has made you Vexed; conceive not that it has been lost upon you when it has made you angry with it. Perhaps there was but that joint of the harness through which the arrow could reach you, namely, your own anger against the truth. I have known many who have frankly confessed, that after they have been to this place, they felt disturbed; they could not sleep. They hated the preacher, and they hated the subject, yet, in about a month's time, they felt they must come again; they disliked it so much they were compelled to hear again of this matter. They could not quite see it, in fact, they would not; they would still hold to their own opinion, but they said within themselves, "I never thought so much about religion in all my life." There is a something in these doctrines that drives right into the soul of man. Other forms of doctrine run off like oil down a slab of marble, but this chisels them, cuts into the very quick. They cannot help feeling there is something here, which if they kick against, it has nevertheless force, and they must ask themselves, "Is the thing true or not?" They cannot be content with buffing it, and

making themselves easy; It takes hold of their thinking powers, and wakes them up to enquiry whether these things are so or not. And it is remarkable that wherever the doctrine, that salvation is of God, and God alone, has been revived; it has always happened that God has sent a revival of true religion. To give you a practical illustration--on the Continent I have been informed, by many who have had good reason to judge, that the Lutheran church is to a very great extent, fallen from its faith, and becoming Unitarian or Neological and the like, but the Calvinistic churches never,--there they stand just the same. There is a salt in these doctrines which preserves truth; there is a savouriness and pungency about them which keeps the constitution of men right. It is a great big sheet anchor; it may seem cumbrous, and in these modern times it may be said to be rather rusty, but in days of storm, that great big bower anchor will have to be thrown out into the sea again. The more I preach the more am I concerned not to give a double testimony about this matter, but to lay it down clearly and distinctly that salvation is of God; that all things, in fact, in the new creation of grace, are of God, and God alone.

And oh! what enthusiasm these truths will stir up in the minds of those who believe them. I have heard them preached by simple, uneducated, unlearned men, and the congregations have been bathed in tears. There has been no stolidness upon the countenances of the hearers. They have heard as if they were hearing the very Word of God and felt the power of it. I have preached during this week in the simplest manner I could these truths to somewhere about twenty or thirty thousand Welsh people in one congregation, and such a sight I never saw, when all as one man they kept crying out, "Aha! Amen! Amen--Gogoniant ;" the whole sermon through, carried away with enthusiasm because they heard again the good old truths that Christmas Evans used to thunder out to them, and which

the Welsh still bold intact, even though the English may choose to reject and scorn them. There is something in them that would nerve men on to do mighty deeds. Cromwell's sword was so sharp and his arm so strong, because he knew the Lord of hosts and trusted in his mighty power, and believed in God's overcoming grace. This made the Ironsides invincible; there were never such men as they. The Calvinist's arm is always strong; he that is of God and knows not man, he who looks to God's purpose and grace and gives him all the glory, is not a man to bow before a tyrant, or to lick the feet of any being. He knows himself chosen of God, and he stands upright, and yet while standing he is full of a fire, of an enthusiasm that makes him work, and compels him to serve the cause of God and truth.

That, however, perhaps, is but by-the-bye. I have other tendencies to mention concerning this doctrine. The fact, that conversion and salvation are of God, is an humbling truth. It is because of its humbling character that men do not like it. To be told that God must save me if I am saved, and that I am in his hand, as clay is in the hands of the potter, "I do not like it," saith one. Well, I thought you would not; whoever dreamed you would? If you had liked it, perhaps it had not been true; your not liking it is an indirect evidence of its truthfulness. To be told that "he must work all my works in me," who can bring me so low as that? Where is boasting then! It is excluded. By what law? the law of works? No, but by the law of grace. Grace puts its hand on their boasting mouth, and shuts it once for all; and then it takes its hand off from the mouth, and that mouth now does not fear to speak to man, though it trembles at the very thought of taking any honour and glory from God. I must say--I am compelled to say--that the doctrine which leaves salvation to the creature and tells him that it depends upon himself, is the exaltation of the flesh, and a

dishonouring of God. But that which puts in God's hand man, fallen man, and tells man that though he has destroyed himself, yet his salvation must be of God, that doctrine humbles man in the very dust, and then he is just in the right place to receive the grace and mercy of God. It is a humbling doctrine.

Again, this doctrine gives the death-blow to all self-sufficiency. What the Arminian wants to do is to arouse man's activity; what we want to do is to kill it once for all, to show him that he is lost and ruined, and that his activities are not now at all equal to the work of conversion; that he must look upward. They seek to make the man stand up; we seek to bring him down, and make him feel that there he lies in the hand of God, and that his business is to submit himself to God, and cry aloud, "Lord, save, or we perish." We hold that man is never so near grace as when be begins to feel that he can do nothing at all. When he says, "I can pray, I can believe, I can do this, and I can do the other," marks of self-sufficiency and arrogance are on his brow. But when he comes to his knees and cries,--

"Oh for this no strength have I,
My strength is at thy feet to lie,"

then we think that God has blessed him, and that the work of grace is in his soul. O sinner! think not that thy own unaided arm can get the victory. Cry unto God, and beg him to take your soul in hand, for you cannot be saved unless he doth it for you. Bless him for the promise which says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Oh ! cry to him, "Lord, draw me by thy grace, that I may run after thee; work all my works in me, and bring me to thyself and save me!" Not to yourself do we bid you look, nor to your prayers, nor to your faith, but to Christ and to his cross, and to that God who is "able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

And there is in this doctrine some consolation for the troubled heart. If all things be of God, my soul, let not thy spirit be ruffled and affrighted by the tempest. "All things are of God;" if there were one thing of me, I were a lost man. If you were about to build a great bridge, and would let me have the placing of one stone, you shall build it as you please, and it will fall. Let me have the management of the keystone, and I will undertake that it shall not stand. So if in the work of salvation there is one thing left dependent upon myself, it must all fall; but if everything be guaranteed and settled by Eternal wills and shalls, then it stands fast and rests secure. Oh! joyous thought to the Christian, his soul is safe, he has given himself up into Christ's hand to be kept, and now the keeping rests with Christ, he has surrendered himself to his Lord and Master to be preserved, and now he knows that come what may, Christ is his bluckler and his shield, and nothing will hurt him. because Jesus keeps daily watch and ward, and will preserve him safely to the end. I do not know where our Arminian brethren get their consolation from. I know, if I believed their doctrine, I should be driven to distraction; but believing as I do, that those whom God begins to save, he will completely save, and that there is not a single stone in the entire building that can ever fail or give way, my soul can sing,

"This covenant stands secure,
Though earth's old columns bow;
The strong, the feeble, and the weak
Are one in Jesus now."

I have one more thing to say about this doctrine. It encourages the sinner. Sinner, sinner! come to Jesus; for "all things are of God." You are naked; the robe in which you shall be dressed is of God. You are filthy; the washing is of God. Come, and be washed. But you are

unworthy; your worthiness must be of God. Come as you are, and he will cleanse you. You are guilty; your pardon is of God. Come to him, and his pardon shall be freely given. But you say, you are hard-hearted; a new heart is of God. Come to him; he will give you the heart of flesh, and take away the heart of stone. But, you say, "I cannot pray as I would." True prayer is of God; he will pour out upon you the Spirit of supplication. But you say, my very coming must be of God. Ay, blessed be God for that. And, therefore, if now you feel something saying to you, "Let me go and trust in Christ," that is of God. Oh ! come with cheerfulness; for there is nothing wanted of you, everything is of God. Is your heart barren? Fruitfulness is of God. Is your heart stubborn? Obedience is of God. Can you not repent? He is exalted on high to give you repentance. Repentance is of God. Do you say, " I cannot believe?" Faith is of God ; it is one of his unspeakable gifts. But do you say, "I am afraid I shall not be able to persevere! Perseverance is of God. All you are bidden to do is simply to be a receiver. Come with your empty pitcher, and hold it now to the flowing fountain; come with your empty lap, and receive the golden store; come with a hungry mouth to feed, and with thirsty lips to drink. You are asked to do nothing; you are asked to be nothing. Cease from thyself, O man, and begin with God. Leave off now to do, and feel, and be, and come and trust in him who did, and was, and felt for you ; and then afterwards, being saved, you shall begin to be, and to feel, and to act, through a new energy, leading to a new life. To live to Christ, you must first die to yourself. Every hope of mortal nurture must be killed before you can receive a divine hope within you. Come, bruised and mangled, crushed and broken, come and take Christ to be your all in all; and if thou canst not stretch out thine hand of thyself, as indeed thou canst not--I speak in my Master's name, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, by

his Spirit's power, believe. It is the duty of God's servants not only to exhort, but with divine authority to command. Man with the withered hand! in the name of Jesus, stretch out thine hand. Thou who hast never believed or repented! "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Dost thou receive the command? The power goes with it. Art thou willing to obey it? That will is God's gift: the power is with the will.

Believe Christ; trust Christ; take him to be everything, and you are saved; your sins are washed away; you are an heir of paradise, and you may rejoice. Clap your wings ye angels; tune your harps anew ye seraphs, ye redeemed! louder, louder, let your strains of music rise toward heaven. O, ye cherubim and seraphim! sing loud unto his name, of whom, and to whom, and by whom are all things, unto whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Chapter 32

Special Thanksgiving to the Father

A Sermon

(No. 319)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, January 15th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

MY DEAR BRETHREN,

I have journeyed happily to the borders of Switzerland, and already feel that the removing of the yoke from the shoulder is one of the readiest means of restoring the metal powers. Much of Popish superstition and idolatry has passed under my observation, and if nothing else could make me a Protestant, what I have seen would do so. One thing I have learned anew, which I would have all my brethren learn, the power of a personal Christ. We Protestants are too apt to make doctrine everything, and the person of Christ is not held in sufficient remembrance; with the Roman Catholic doctrine is nothing, but the person is ever kept in view. The evil is, that the image of Christ before the eye of the Papist is carnal and not spiritual; but could we always keep o'er Lord before our eyes, his spiritual sense, we should be better men than any set of doctrines can ever make us. The Lord give to us to abide in him and so to bring forth much fruit.

Baden-Baden, June 15th, 1860

C. H. Spurgeon.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."--Colossians 1:12, 13.

THIS PASSAGE IS A MINE of riches. I can anticipate the difficulty in

preaching and the regret in concluding we shall experience this evening because we are not able to dig out all the gold which lies in this precious vein. We lack the power to grasp and the time to expatiate upon that volume of truths which is here condensed into a few short sentences.

We are exhorted to "give thanks unto the Father." This counsel is at once needful and salutary. I think, my brethren, we scarcely need to be told to give thanks unto the Son. The remembrance of that bleeding body hanging upon the cross is ever present to our faith. The nails and the spear, his griefs, the anguish of his soul, and his sweat of agony, make ouch tender touching appeals to our gratitude--these will prevent us always from ceasing our songs, and sometimes fire our hearts with rekindling rapture in praise of the man Christ Jesus. Yes we will bless thee, dearest Lord; our souls are all on fire. As we survey the, wondrous cross, we cannot but shout--

"O for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak."

It is in a degree very much the same with the Holy Spirit. I think we are compelled to feel every day our dependence upon his constant influence. He abides with us as a present and personal Comforter and Counsellor. We, therefore, do praise the Spirit of Grace, who hath made our heart his temple, and who works in us all that is gracious, virtuous, and well-pleasing in the sight of God. If there be any one Person in the Trinity whom we are more apt to forget than another in our praises, it is God the Father. In fact there are some who even get a wrong idea of Him, a slanderous idea of that God whose name is LOVE. They imagine that love dwelt in Christ, rather than in the Father, and

that our salvation is rather due to the Son and the Holy Spirit, than to our Father God. Let us not be of the number of the ignorant, but let us receive this truth. We are as much indebted to the Father as to any other Person of the Sacred Three. He as much and as truly loves us as any of the adorable Three Persons. He is as truly worthy of our highest praise as either the Son or the Holy Spirit.

A remarkable fact, which we should always bear in mind, is this:--in the Holy Scriptures most of the operations which are set down as being the works of the Spirit, are in other Scriptures ascribed to God the Father. Do we say it is God the Spirit that quickens the sinner who is dead in sin? it is true; but you will find in another passage it is said "The Father quickeneth whom he will." Do we say that the Spirit is the sanctifier, and that the sanctification of the soul is wrought by the Holy Ghost? You will find a passage in the opening of the Epistle of St. Jude, in which it is said, "Sanctified by God the Father." Now, how are we to account for this? I think it may be explained thus. God the Spirit cometh from God the Father, and therefore whatever acts are performed by the Spirit are truly done by the Father, because he sendeth forth the Spirit. And again, the Spirit is often the instrument--though I say not this in any way to derogate from his glory--he is often the instrument with which the Father works. It is the Father who says to the dry bones, live; it is the Spirit who, going forth with the divine word, makes them live. The quickening is due as much to the word as to the influence that went with the word; and as the word came with all the bounty of free grace and goodwill from the Father, the quickening is due to him. It is true that the seal on our hearts is the Holy Spirit, he is the seal, hut it is the Eternal Father's hand that stamps the seal; the Father communicates the Spirit to seal our adoption. The works of the Spirit are, many of them, I

repeat it again, attributed to the Father, because he worketh in, through, and by the Spirit.

The works of the Son of God, I ought to observe are every one of them in intimate connection with the Father. If the Son comes into the world, it is because the Father sends him; if the Son calls his people, it is because his Father gave this people into his hands. If the Son redeems the chosen race, is not the Son himself the Father's gift, and doth not God send his Son into the world that we may live through him? So that the Father, the great Ancient of Days, is ever to be extolled; and we must never omit the full homage of our hearts to him when we sing that sacred doxology,

"Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

In order to excite your gratitude to God the Father to-night, I propose to dilate a little upon this passage, as God the Holy Spirit shall enable me. If you will look at the text, you will see two blessings in it. The first has regard to the future; it is a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. The second blessing, which must go with the first, for indeed it is the cause of the first, the effective cause, has relation to the past. Here we read of our deliverance from the power of darkness. Let us meditate a little upon each of these blessings, and then, in the third place, I will endeavor to show the relation which exists between the two.

I. The first blessing introduced to our notice is this--"God the Father has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is a PRESENT BLESSING. Not a mercy laid up for us in the covenant, which we have not yet received, but it is a blessing which every true believer already has in his hand. Those mercies in the covenant of which we have the earnest now while we wait for the full possession, are just as rich, and just as certain as those which have

been already with abundant lovingkindness bestowed on us, but still they are not so precious in our enjoyment. The mercy we have in store, and in hand is after all, the main source of our present comfort. And oh what a blessing this! "Made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." The true believer is fit for heaven; he is meet to be a partaker of the inheritance--and that now, at this very moment. What does this mean? Does it mean that the believer is perfect; that he is free from sin? No, my brethren, where shall you ever find such perfection in this world? If no man can be a believer but the perfect man, then what has the perfect man to believe? Could he not walk by sight? When he is perfect, he may cease to be a believer. No, brethren, it is not such perfection that is meant although perfection is implied, and assuredly will be given as the result. Far less does this mean that we have a right to eternal life from any doings of our own. We have a fitness for eternal life, a meetness for it, but we have no desert of it. We deserve nothing of God even now, in ourselves. but his eternal wrath and his infinite displeasure. What, then, does It mean? Why, it means just this: we are so far meet that we are accepted in the Beloved, adopted into the family, and fitted by divine approbation to dwell with the saints in light There is a woman chosen to be a bride; she is fitted to be married, fitted to enter into the honorable state and condition of matrimony; but at present she has not on the bridal garment, she is not like the bride adorned for her husband. You do not see her yet robed in her elegant attire, with her ornaments upon her, but you know she is fitted to be a bride, she is received and welcomed as such in the family of her destination. So Christ has chosen his Church to be married to him; she has not yet put on her bridal garment, beautiful array in which she shall stand before the father's throne, but notwithstanding, there is such a fitness in her to be the bride of

Christ, when she shall have bathed herself for a little while, and lain for a little while in the bed of spices--there is such a fitness in her character, such a grace given adaptation in her to become the royal bride of her glorious Lord, and to become a partaker of the enjoyments of bliss--that it may be said of the church as a whole, and of every member of it, that they are "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

The Greek word, moreover, bears some such meaning as this though I cannot give the exact idiom, it is always difficult when a word is not used often. This word is only used twice that I am aware of, in the New Testament. The word may be employed for "suitable," or, I think, "sufficient" "He hath made us meet"--sufficient--"to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But I cannot give my idea without borrowing another figure. When a child is born, it is at once endowed with all the faculties of humanity. If those powers are awanting at first, they will not come afterwards. It has eyes, it has hands, it has feet, and all its physical organs. These of course are as it were in embryo. The senses though perfect at first, must be gradually developed, and the understanding gradually matured. It can see but little, it cannot discern distances. it can hear, but it cannot hear distinctly enough at first to know from what direction the sound comes; but you never find a new leg, a new arm, a new eye, or a new ear growing on that child. Each of these powers will expand and enlarge, but still there is the whole man there at first, and the child is sufficient for a man. Let but God in his infinite providence cause it to feed, and give it strength and increase, it has sufficient for manhood. It does not want either arm or leg, nose or ear. you cannot make it grow a new member; nor does it require a near member either; all are there. In like manner, the moment a man is regenerated, there

is every faculty in his new creation that there shall be, even when he gets to heaven. It only needs to be developed and brought out: he will not have a new power, he will not have a new grace, he will have those which he had before, developed and brought out. Just as we are told by the careful observer, that in the acorn there is in embryo every root and every bough and every leaf of the future tree, which only requires to be developed and brought out in their fullness. So, in the true believer, there is a sufficiency or meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. All that he requires is, not that a new thing should be implanted, but that that which God has put there in the moment of regeneration, shall be cherished and nurtured, and made to grow and increase, till it comes unto perfection and he enters into "the inheritance of the saints in light." This is, as near as I can give it to you, the exact meaning and literal interpretation of the text, as I understand it.

But you may say to me, "In what sense is this meetness or fitness for eternal life the work of God the Father? Are we already made meet for heaven? How is this the rather's work?" Look at the text a moment, and I will answer you in three ways.

What is heaven? We read it is an inheritance. Who are fit for an inheritance? Sons. Who makes us sons? "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be galled the sons of God." A son is fitted for an inheritance. The moment the son is born he is fitted to be an heir. All that is wanted is that he shall grow up and be capable of possession. But he is fit for an inheritance at first. If he were not a son he could not inherit as an heir. Now as soon as ever we become sons we are meet to inherit. There is in us an adaptation, a power and possibility for us to have an inheritance. This is the prerogative of the Father, to adopt us into his family, and to

"beget us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." And do you not see, that as adoption is really the meetness for inheritance, it is the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?"

Again, heaven is an inheritance; but whose inheritance is it? It is an inheritance of the saints. It is not an inheritance of sinners, but of saints--that is, of the holy ones--of those who have been made saints by being sanctified. Turn then, to the Epistle of Jude, and you will see at once who it is that sanctified. You will observe the moment you fix your eye upon the passage that it is God the Father. In the first verse you read, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father." It is an inheritance for saints: and who are saints? The moment a man believes in Christ, he may know himself to have bean truly set apart in the covenant decree; and he finds consecration, if I may so speak, verified in his own experience, for he has now become "a new creature in Christ Jesus," separated from the rest of the world, and then it is manifest and made known that God has taken him to be his son for ever. The meetness which I must have, in order to enjoy the inheritance of the saints in light, is my becoming a son. God hath made me and all believers sons, therefore we are meet for the inheritance; so then that meetness has come from the Father. How meetly therefore doth the Father claim our gratitude, our adoration and our love!

You will however observe, it is not merely said that heaven is the inheritance of the saints, but that it is "the inheritance of the saints in light." So the saints dwell in light--the light of knowledge, the light of purity, the light of joy, the light of love, pure ineffable love, the light of everything that is glorious and ennobling. There they dwell, and if I am to appear meet for that inheritance, what

evidence must I have? I must have light shining into my own soul. But where can I get it? Do I not read that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and Cometh down"--yea verily, but from whom? From the Spirit? No--"from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The preparation to enter into the inheritance in light is light. and light comes from the Father of lights; therefore, my meetness, if I have light in myself, is the work of the Father, and I must give him praise. Do you see then, that as there are three words used here--"the inheritance of the saints in light," so we have a threefold meetness? We are adopted and made sons. God hath sanctified us and set us apart. And then, again, he hath put light into our hearts. All this, I say, is the work of the Father, and in this sense, we are "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

A few general observations here. Brethren, I am persuaded that if an angel from heaven were to come to-night and single out any one believer from the crowd here assembled, there is not one believer that is unfit to be taken to heaven. You may not be ready to be taken to heaven now; that is to say, if I foresaw that you were going to live, I would tell you you were unfit to die, in a certain sense. But were you to die now in your pew, if you believe in Christ, you are fit for heaven. You have a meetness even now which would take you there at once, without being committed to purgatory for a season. You are even now fit to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." You have but to gasp out your last breath and you shall be in heaven, and there shall not be one spirit in heaven more fit for heaven than you, nor one soul more adapted for the place than you are. You shall be just as fitted for its element as those who are nearest to the eternal throne.

Ah! this makes the heirs of glory think much of God the Father. When we

reflect, my brethren, upon our state by nature, and how fit we are to be fire-brands in the flames of hell--yet to think that we are this night, at this very moment if Jehovah willed it, fit to sweep the golden harps with joyful fingers, that this head is fit this very night to wear the everlasting crown, that these loins are fit to be girded with that fair white robe throughout eternity, I say, this makes us think gratefully of God the Father; this makes us clap our hands with joy, and say, "thanks be unto God the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Do ye not remember the penitent thief? It was but a few minutes before that he had been cursing Christ. I doubt not that he had joined with the other, for it is said, "They that were crucified with him reviled him." Not one, but both; they did it. And then a gleam of supernatural glory lit up the face of Christ, and the thief saw and believed. And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, this day," though the sun is setting, "this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." No long preparation required, no sweltering in purifying fires. And so shall it be with us. We may have been in Christ Jesus to our own knowledge but three weeks, or we may have been in him for ten years, or threescore years and ten--the date of our conversion makes no difference in our meetness for heaven, in a certain sense. True indeed the older we grow the more grace we have tasted, the riper we are becoming, and the fitter to be housed in heaven; but that is in another sense of the word,--the Spirit's meetness which he gives. But with regard to that meetness which the Father gives, I repeat, the blade of corn, the blade of gracious wheat that has just appeared above the surface of conviction, is as fit to be carried up to heaven as the full-grown corn in the ear. The sanctification wherewith we are sanctified by God the Father is not progressive, it Is complete at once, we are now adapted

for heaven, now fitted for it, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

Into this subject I might have entered more fully; but I have not time. I am sure I have left some knots untied, and you must untie them if you can yourselves; and let me recommend you to untie them on your knees--the mysteries of the kingdom of God are studied much the best when you are in prayer.

II. The second mercy is A MERCY THAT LOOKS BACK. We sometimes prefer the mercies that look forward, because they unfold such a bright prospect.

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."

But here is a mercy that looks backward; turns its back, as it were, on the heaven of our anticipation, and looks back on the gloomy past, and the dangers from which we have escaped. Let us read the account of it--"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." This verse is an explanation of the preceding, as we shall have to show in a few minutes. But just now let us survey this mercy by itself. Ah! my brethren, what a description have we here of what matter of men we used to be. We were under "the power of darkness." Since I have been musing on this text, I have turned these words over and over in my mind--"the power of darkness!" It seems to me one of the most awful expressions that man ever attempted to expound. I think I could deliver a discourse from it, if God the Spirit helped me, which might make every bone in your body shake. "The power of darkness!" We all know that there is a moral darkness which exercises its awful spell over the mind of the sinner. Where God is unacknowledged the mind is void of judgment. Where God is unworshipped the heart of man becomes a ruin. The chambers of that dilapidated heart are haunted by ghostly fears and degraded

superstitions. The dark places of that reprobate mind are tenanted by vile lusts and noxious passions, like vermin and reptiles, from which in open daylight we turn with disgust. And even natural darkness is tremendous. In the solitary confinement which is practiced in some of our penitentiaries the very worst results would be produced if the treatment were prolonged. If one of you were to be taken to-night and led into some dark cavern, and left there, I can imagine that for a moment, not knowing your fate, you might feel a child-like kind of interest about it;--there might be, perhaps, a laugh as you found yourselves in the dark; there might for the moment, from the novelty of the position, be some kind of curiosity excited. There might, perhaps, be a flush of silly joy. In a little time you might endeavor to compose yourself to sleep; possibly you night sleep; but if you should awake, and still find yourself down deep in the bowels of earth, where never a ray of sun or candle light could reach you; do you know the next feeling that would come over you? It would be a kind of idiotic thoughtlessness. You would find it impossible to control your desperate imagination. You heart would say, "O God I am alone, alone, alone, in this dark place." How would you cast your eyeballs all around, and never catching a gleam of light, your mind would begin to fail. Your next stage would be one of increasing terror. You would fancy that you saw something, and then you would cry, "Ah! I would I could see something, were it foe or fiend!" You would feel the dark sides of your dungeon. You would begin to "scribble on the walls," like David before king Achish. Agitation would cease hold upon you, and it you were kept there much longer, delirium and death would be the consequence. We have heard of many who have been taken from the penitentiary to the lunatic asylum; and the lunacy is produced partly by the solitary confinement, and partly by the darkness in which they are placed. In a report lately

written by the Chaplain of Newgate, there are some striking reflections upon the influence of darkness in a way of discipline. Its first effect is to shut the culprit up to his own reflections, and make him realize his true position in the iron grasp of the outraged law. Methinks the man that has defied his keepers, and come in there cursing and swearing, when he has found himself alone in darkness, where he cannot even hear the rattling of carriages along the streets, and can see no light whatever, is presently cowed; he gives in, he grows tame. "The power of darkness" literally is something awful. If I had time, I would enlarge upon this subject. We cannot properly describe what "the power of darkness" is, even in this world. The sinner is plunged into the darkness of his sins, and he sees nothing, he knows nothing. Let him remain there a little longer, and that joy of curiosity, that hectic joy which he now has in the path of sin, will die away, and there will come over him a spirit of slumber. Sin will make him drowsy, so that he will not hear the voice of the ministry, crying to him to escape for his life. Let him continue in it, and it will by-and-bye make him spiritually an idiot. He will become so in sin, that common reason will be lost on him. All the arguments that a sensible man will receive, will be only wasted on him. Let him go on, and he will proceed from bad to worse, till he acquires the raving mania of a desperado in sin; and let death step in, and the darkness will have produced its full effect; he will come into the delirious madness of hell. Ah! it needs but the power of sin to make a man more truly hideous than human thought can realize, or language paint. Oh "the power of darkness!"

Now, my brethren, all of us were under this power once. It is but a few months--a few weeks with some of you--since you were under the power of darkness and of sin. Some of you had only got as far as the curiosity of it; others had got as far as the sleepiness of it; a good many of

you had got as far as the apathy of it; and I do not know but some of you had got almost to the terror of it. You had so cursed and swore; so yelled ye out your blasphemies, that you seemed to be ripening for hell; but, praised and blessed be the name of the Father, he has "translated you from the power of darkness, into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Having thus explained this term, "the power of darkness," to show you what you were, let us take the next word, "and hath translated us." Whet a angular word this--"translated"--is. I dare say you think it means the process by which a word is interpreted, when the sense is retained, while the expression is rendered in another language. That is one meaning of the word "translation," but it is not the meaning here. The word is used by Josephus in this sense--the taking away of a people who have been dwelling in a certain country, and planting them in another place. This is called a translation. We sometimes hear of a bishop being translated or removed from one see to another. Now, if you want to have the idea explained, give me your attention while I bring out an amazing instance of a great translation. The children of Israel were in Egypt under taskmasters that oppressed them very sorely, and brought them into iron bondage. What did God do for these people? There were two millions of them. He did not temper the tyranny of the tyrant; he did not influence his mind, to give them a little more liberty; but he translated his people; he took the whole two millions bodily, with a high hand and outstretched arm, and led them through the wilderness, and translated them into the kingdom of Canaan; and there they were settled. What an achievement was that, when, with their flocks and their herds, and their little ones, the whole host of Israel went out of Egypt, crossed the Jordan, and came into Canaan! My dear brethren, the whole of it was not equal to the achievement of God's powerful

grace, when he! brings one poor sinner out of the region of sin into the kingdom of holiness and peace. It was easier for God to bring Israel out of Egypt, to split the Red Sea, to make a highway through the pathless wilderness, to drop manna from heaven, to send the whirlwind to drive out the kings; it was easier for Omnipotence to do all this, than to translate a man from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son. This is the grandest achievement of Omnipotence. The sustenance of the whole universe, I do believe, is even less than this--the changing of a bad heart, the subduing of an iron will. But thanks be unto the Father, he has done all that for you and for me. He has brought us out of darkness, he has translated us, taken up the old tree that has struck its roots never so deep--taken it up, blessed be God, roots and all, and planted it in a goodly soil. He had to cut the top off, it is true--the high branches of our pride; but the tree has grown better in the near soil than it ever did before. Who ever heard of moving so huge a plant as a man who has grown fifty years old in sin? Oh! what wonders hath our Father done for us I He has taken the wild leopard of the wood, tamed it into a lamb, and purged away its spots. He has regenerated the poor Ethiopian--oh, how black are were by nature--our blackness was more than skin deep; it went to the center of our hearts; but, blessed be his name, he hath washed us white, and is still carrying on the divine operation, and he will yet completely deliver us from every taint of sin, and will finally bring us into the kingdom of his dear son. Here, then, in the second mercy, we discern from what we were delivered, and how we were delivered--God the Father hath "translated" us.

But where are we now? Into what place is the believer brought, when he is brought out of the power of darkness? He is brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Into what other kingdom would the Christian desire

to be brought? Brethren. a republic may sound very well in theory, but in spiritual matters, the last thing we want is a republic. We want a kingdom. I love to have Christ an absolute monarch in the heart. I do not want to have a doubt about it. I want to give up all my liberty to him. for I feel that I never shall be free till my self-control is all gone; that I shall never have my will truly free till it is bound in the golden fetters of his sweet love. We are brought into a kingdom--he is Lord and Sovereign, and he has made us "kings and priests unto our God," and we shall reign with him. The proof that we are in this kingdom must consist in our obedience to our King. Here, perhaps, we may raise many causes and questions, but surely we can say after all, though we have offended our King many times, yet our heart is loyal to him. "Oh, thou precious Jesus! we would obey thee, and yield submission to every one of thy laws, our sins are not wilful and beloved sins, but though we fall we can truly say, that we would be holy as thou art holy, our heart is true towards thy statutes; Lord, help us to run in the way of thy commandments."

So, you see, this mercy which God the Father hath given to us, this second of these present mercies, is, that he hath "translated us out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son." This is the Father's work. Shall we not love God the Father from this day forth? Will we not give him thanks, and sing our hymns to him, and exalt and triumph in his great name?

III. Upon the third point, I shall be as brief as possible; it is to

SHOW THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO VERSES.

When I get a passage of Scripture to meditate upon, I like, if I can, to see its drift, then I like to examine its various parts, and see if I can understand each separate clause; and then I want to go back again, and see what one clause has to do with another. I looked and

looked again at this text, and wondered what connection there could be between the two verses. "Giving thanks unto God the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Well, that is right enough; we can see how this is the work of God the Father, to make us meet to go to heaven. But has the next verse, the 13th, anything to do with our meetness?--"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Well, I looked it over and I said I will read it in this way. I see the 12th verse tells me that the inheritance of heaven is the inheritance of light. Is heaven light? Then I can see my meetness for it as described in the 13th verse.--He hath delivered me from the power of darkness. Is not that the same thing? If I am delivered from the power of darkness, is not that being made meet to dwell in light? If I am now brought out of darkness into light, and am walking in the light, is not that the very meetness which is spoken of in the verse before? Then I read again. It says they are saints. Well, the saints are a people that obey the Son. Here is my meetness then in the 13th verse, where it says "He hath translated me from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son." So that I not only have the light, but the sonship too, for I am in "the kingdom of his dear Son." But how about the inheritance? Is there anything about that in the 13th verse? It is an inheritance; shall I find anything about a meetness for it there? Yes, I find that I am in the kingdom of his dear Son. How came Christ to have a kingdom? Why, by inheritance. Then it seems I am in his inheritance; and if I am in his inheritance here, then I am meet to be in it above, for I am in it already. I am even now part of it and partner of it, since I am in the kingdom which he inherits from his Father, and therefore there is the meetness.

I do not know whether I have put this plainly enough before you. If you

will be kind enough to look at your Bible, I will just recapitulate.

You see, heaven is a place of light; when we are brought out of darkness, that, of course, is the meetness for light. It is a place for sons; when we are brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son, we are of course made sons, so that there is the meetness for it. It is an inheritance; and when we are brought into the inherited kingdom of God's dear Son, we enjoy the inheritance now, and consequently are fitted to enjoy it for ever.

Having thus shown the connection between these verses, I propose now to close with a few general observations. I like so to expound the Scripture, that we can draw some practical inferences from it. Of course the first inference is this: let us from this night forward never omit God the Father in our praises. I think I have said this already six times over in the sermon. Why I am repeating it so often, is that we may never forget it. Martin Luther said he preached upon justification by faith every day in the week and then the people would not understand. There are some truths, I believe, that need to be said over and over again, either because our silly hearse will not receive, or our treacherous memories will not hold them. Sing, I beseech you, habitually, the praises of the Father in heaven, as you do the praises of the Son hanging upon the cross. Love as truly God, the ever-living God, as you love Jesus the God-man, the Savior who once died for you. That is the great inference.

Yet another inference arises. Brothers and sisters, are you conscious to-night that you are not now what you once were? Are you sure that the power of darkness does not now rest upon you, that you love divine knowledge, that you are panting after heavenly joys? Are you sure that you have been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son?" Then never be troubled about thoughts of death, because, come death whenever

it may, you are meet to be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Let no thought distress you about death's coming to you at an unseasonable hour. Should it come to-morrow should it come now, if your faith is fixed on nothing less than Jesu's blood and righteousness, you shall see the face of God with acceptance. I have that consciousness in my soul, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, of my adoption into the family of God, that I feel that though I should never preach again, but should lay down my body and my charge together, ere I should reach my home, and rest in my bed, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and more, that I should be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." It is not always that one feels that but I would have you never rest satisfied till you do, till you know your meetness, till you are conscious of it; until, moreover, you are panting to be gone, because you feel that you have powers which never can be satisfied short-of heaven--powers which heaven only can employ.

One more reflection lingers behind. There are some of you here that cannot be thought by the utmost charity of judgment, to be "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Ah! if a wicked man should go to heaven without being converted, heaven would be no heaven to him. Heaven is not adapted for sinners; it is not a place for them. If you were to take a Hottentot who has long dwelt at the equator up to where the Esquimaux are dwelling, and tell him that you would show him the aurora, and all the glories of the North Pole, the poor wretch could not appreciate them; he would say, "It is not the element for me; it is not the place where I could rest happy! And if you were to take, on the other hand, some dwarfish dweller in the north, down to the region where trees grow to a stupendous height, and where the spices give their balmy odours to the gale, and bid him live there under the torrid zone, he could enjoy nothing; he would say, "This is not the place for

me, because it is not adapted to my nature." Or if you were to take the vulture, that has never fed on anything but carrion, and put it into the noblest dwelling you could make for it, and feed it with the daintiest meals, it would not be happy because it is not food that is adapted for it. And you, sinner, you are nothing but a carrion vulture; nothing makes you happy but sin, you do not want too much psalm singing, do you? Sunday is a dull day to you; you like to get it over, you do not care about your Bible; you would as soon there should be no Bible at all, You find that going to a meeting-house or a church is very dull work indeed. Oh then you will not be troubled with that in eternity; do not agitate yourself. If you love not God, and die as you are, you shall go to your own company, you shall go to your jolly mates, you shall go to your good fellows; those who have been your mates on earth shall be your mates for ever; but you shall go to the Prince of those good fellows, unless you repent and be converted. Where God is you cannot come. It is not an element suited to you. As well place a bird at the bottom of the sea, or a fish in the air, as place an ungodly sinner in heaven. What is to be done then? You must have a new nature. I pray God to give it to you. Remember if now you feel your need of a Savior, that is the beginning of the new nature. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" cast yourselves simply on him, trust in nothing but his blood, and then the new nature shall be expanded, and you shall be made meet by the Holy Spirit's operations to be a "partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." There is many a man who has come into this house of prayer, many a man is now present, who has come in here a rollicking fellow, fearing neither God nor devil. Many a man has come from the ale house up to this place. If he had died then, where would his soul have been? But the Lord that very night met him, There are trophies of that grace present here to-night. You can say, "Thanks

be to the Father, who hath brought us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." And if God has done that for some, why cannot he do it for others? Why need you despair, O poor sinner? If thou art here to-night, the worst sinner out of hell, remember, the gate of mercy stands wide open, and Jesus bids thee come, Conscious of thy guilt, flee, flee to him. Look to his cross, and thou shalt find pardon in his veins, and life in his death.

Chapter 33

Contentment

A Sermon

(No. 320)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, March 25th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."--Philippians 4:11.

THE APOSTLE Paul was a very learned man, but not the least among his manifold acquisitions in science was this--he had learned to be content. Such learning is far better than much that is acquired in the schools. Their learning may look studiously back on the past, but too often those who cull the relics of antiquity with enthusiasm, are thoughtless about the present, and neglect the practical duties of daily life. Their learning may open up dead languages to those who will never derive any living benefit from them. Far better the learning of the apostle. It was a thing of ever-present utility, and alike serviceable for all generations, one of the rarest, but one of the most desirable accomplishments. I put the senior wrangler, and the most learned of our Cambridge men in the lowest form, compared with this learned apostle; for this surely is the highest degree in humanities to which a man can possibly attain, to have learned in whatsoever state he is, to be content. You will see at once from reading the text, upon the very surface, that contentment in all states is not a natural propensity of man. Ill weeds grow apace; covetousness, discontent, and murmuring, are as natural to man as thorns are to the soil. You have no need to sow thistles and brambles; they come up naturally enough,

because they are indigenous to earth, upon which rests the curse; so you have no need to teach men to complain, they complain fast enough without any education. But the precious things of the earth must be cultivated. If we would have wheat, we must plough and sow; if we want flowers, there must be the garden, and all the gardener's care. Now, contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated. It will not grow in us by nature; it is the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be specially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in it. Paul says, "I have learned to be content;" as much as to say he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain to the mystery of that great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned, and then broke down. Frequently too, like boys at school, he had his knuckles rapped; frequently he found that it was not easy learning this task, and when at last he had attained unto it, and could say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," he was an old grey-headed man upon the borders of the grave, a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome.

We, my brethren, might well be willing to endure Paul's infirmities, and share the cold dungeon with him, if we too might by any means attain unto such a degree of contentment. Do not indulge, any of you, the silly notion that you can be contented without learning, or learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally, but a science to be acquired gradually. The very words of the next text might suggest this, even if we did not know it from experience. We need not be taught to murmur, but we must be taught to acquiesce in the will and good pleasure of the Lord our God.

When the apostle had uttered these words, he immediately gave a commentary upon them. Read the 12th verse, "I know both how to be

abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Notice first, that the apostle said he knew how to be abased. A wonderful knowledge this. When all men honour us, then we may very well be content; but when the finger of scorn is pointed, at us, when our character is held in ill repute, and men hiss us by the wayside, it requires much gospel knowledge to be able to endure that with patience and with cheerfulness. When we are increasing, and growing in rank, and honour, and human esteem, it is easy work to be contented; but when we have to say with John the Baptist, "I must decrease," or when we see some other servant advanced to our place, and another man bearing the palm we all had longed to hold, it is not easy to sit still, and without an envious feeling cry with Moses, "Would to God that all the Lord's servants were prophets." To hear another man praised at your own expense, to find your own virtues made as a foil to set forth the superior excellence of some new rival--this, I say, is beyond human nature, to be able to bear it with joy and thankfulness, and to bless God. There must be something noble in the heart of the man who is able to lay all his honours down as willingly as he took them up, when he can as cheerfully submit himself to Christ to humble him, as to lift him up and seat him upon a throne. And yet, my brethren, we have not any one of us learned what the apostle knew, if we are not as ready to glorify Christ by shame, by ignominy and by reproach, as by honour and by esteem among men. We must be ready to give up everything for him. We must be willing to go downwards, in order that Christ's name may ascend upwards, and be the better known and glorified among men. "I know how to be abased," says the apostle.

His second piece of knowledge is equally valuable, "I know how to

abound." There are a great many men that know a little how to be abased, that do not know at all how to abound. When they are put down in the pit with Joseph, they look up and see the starry promise, and the hope for an escape. But when they are put on the top of a pinnacle, their heads grow dizzy, and they are ready to fall. When they were poor they used to battle it, as one of our great national poets has said--

"Yet many things, impossible to thought,
Have been by Need to full perfection brought.
The daring of the soul proceeds from thence,
Sharpness of Wit, and active Diligence;
Prudence at once and Fortitude it gives;
And, if in patience taken, mends our lives."

But mark the same men after success has crowned their struggles. Their troubles are over; they are rich and increased with goods. And have you not often seen a man who has sprung up from nothing to wealth, how purse-proud he becomes, how vain, how intolerant? Nobody would have thought that man ever kept a shop; you would not believe that man at any time ever used to sell a pound of candles, would you? He is so great in his own eyes, that one would have thought the blood of all the Caesars must flow in his veins. He does not know his old acquaintances. The familiar friend of other days he now passes by with scarce a nod of recognition. The man does not know how to abound; he has grown proud; he is exalted above measure. There have been men who have been lifted up for a season to popularity in the Church. They have preached successfully, and done some mighty work. For this the people have honoured them, and rightly so. But then they have become tyrants; they have lusted after authority; they have looked down contemptuously upon everybody else, as if other men were small pigmies, and they were huge giants. Their conduct has been intolerable, and they have soon been

cast down from their high places, because they did not know how to abound. There was once a square piece of paper put up into George Whitfield's pulpit, by way of a notice, to this effect:--"A young man who has lately inherited a large fortune, requests the prayers of the congregation." Right well was the prayer asked, for when we go up the hill we need prayer that we may be kept steady. Going down the hill of fortune there is not half the fear of stumbling. The Christian far oftener disgraces his profession in prosperity than when he is being abased. There is another danger--the danger of growing worldly. When a man finds that his wealth increases, it is wonderful how gold will stick to the fingers. The man who had just enough, thought if he had more than he required he would be exceedingly liberal. With a shilling purse he had a guinea heart, but now with a guinea purse he has a shilling heart. He finds that the money adheres, and he cannot get it off. You have heard of the spider that is called a "money spinner," I do not know why it is called so, except that it is one of the sort of spiders you cannot get off your fingers; it gets on one hand, then on the other hand, then on your sleeve; it is here and there; you cannot get rid of it unless you crush it outright: so it is with many who abound. Gold is a good thing when put to use--the strength, the sinews of commerce and of charity--but it is a bad thing in the heart, and begets "foul-cankering rust." Gold is a good thing to stand on, but a bad thing to have about one's loins, or over one's head. It matters not, though it be precious earth with which a man is buried alive. Oh, how many Christians have there been who seemed as if they were destroyed by their wealth! What leanness of soul and neglect of spiritual things have been brought on through the very mercies and bounties of God! Yet this is not a matter of necessity, for the apostle Paul tells us that he knew how to abound. When he had much, he knew how

to use it. He had asked of God that he might be kept humble--that when he had a full sail he might have plenty of ballast--that when his cup ran over he might not let it run to waste--that in his time of plenty he might be ready to give to those that needed--and that as a faithful steward he might hold all he had at the disposal of his Lord. This is divine learning. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound." The apostle goes on to say, "everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry." It is a divine lesson, let me say, to know how to be full; for the Israelites were full once, and while the flesh was yet in heir mouth the wrath of God came upon them. And there have been many that have asked for mercies, that they might satisfy their own heart's lust; as it is written, "the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Fulness of bread has often made fulness of blood, and that has brought on wantonness of spirit. When men have too much of God's mercies--strange that we should have to say this, and yet it is a great fact--when men have much of God's providential mercies, it often happens that they have but little of God's grace, and little gratitude for the bounties they have received. They are full, and they forget God; satisfied with earth, they are content to do without heaven. Rest assured, my dear hearers, it is harder to know how to be full than it is to know how to be hungry. To know how to be hungry is a sharp lesson, but to know how to be full is the harder lesson after all. So desperate is the tendency of human nature to pride and forgetfulness of God! As soon as ever we have a double stock of manna, and begin to hoard it, it breeds worms and becomes a stench in the nostrils of God. Take care that you ask in your prayers that God would teach you how to be full.

The apostle knew still further how to experience the two extremes of fulness and hunger. What a trial that is! To have one day a path strewn

with mercies, and the next day to find the soil beneath you barren of ever comfort. I can readily imagine the poor man being contented in his poverty, for he has been inured to it. He is like a bird that has been born in a cage, and does not know what liberty means. But for a man who has had much of this world's goods, and thus has been full, to be brought to absolute penury, he is like the bird that once soared on highest wing but is now encaged. Those poor larks you sometimes see in the shops, always seem as if they would be looking up, and they are constantly pecking at the wires, fluttering their wings, and wanting to fly away. So will it be with you unless grace prevent it. If you have been rich and are brought down to be poor, you will find it hard to know "how to be hungry." Indeed, my brethren, it must be a sharp lesson. We complain sometimes of the poor, that they murmur. Ah! We should murmur a great deal more than they do, if their lot fell to us. To sit down at the table, where there is nothing to eat, and five or six little children crying for bread, were enough to break the father's heart. Or for the mother, when her husband has been carried to the tomb, to gaze round on the gloom-stricken home, press her new-born infant to her bosom, and look upon the others, with widowed heart remembering that they are without a father to seek their livelihood. Oh! It must need much grace to know how to be hungry. And for the man who has lost a situation, and has been walking all over London--perhaps a thousand miles--to get a place, and he cannot get one, to come home, and know that when he faces his wife, her first question will be "Have you brought home any bread?" "Have you found anything to do?" and to have to tell her "No; there have been no doors open to me." It is hard to prove hunger, and bear it patiently. I have had to admire, and look with a sort of reverence on some of the members of this Church, when I have happened to hear afterwards of their privations. They would not

tell anyone, and they would not come to me; but they endured their pangs in secret, struggled heroically through all their difficulties and dangers, and came out more than conquerors. Ah! Brothers and sisters, it looks an easy lesson when you come to see it in a book, but it is not quite so easy when you come to put it in practice. It is hard to know how to be full, but it is a sharp thing to know how to be hungry. Our apostle had learned both--both how to abound, and to suffer need."

Having thus expounded to you the apostle Paul's own commentary, in enlarging upon the words of my text, let me return to the passage itself. You may now ask by what course of study did he acquire this peaceful frame of mind? And of one thing we may be quite certain, it was by no stoic process of self-government, but simply and exclusively by faith in the Son of God.

You may easily imagine a nobleman whose home is the abode of luxury, travelling through foreign parts for purposes of scientific discovery, or going forth to command some military expedition in the service of his country. In either case he may be well content with his fare, and feel that there is nothing to repine at. And why? Because he had no right to expect anything better; not because it bore any comparison with his rank, his fortune, or his social position at home. So our apostle. He had said "Our conversation or citizenship is in heaven." Travelling through earth as a pilgrim and stranger he was content to take travellers fare. Or entering the battle field, he had no ground of complaint that perils and distresses should sometimes encircle his path, while at other times a truce gave him some peaceful and pleasing intervals.

Again, adverting to the text, you will notice that the word "herewith" is written in italics. If therefore we do not omit it, we need not lay

upon it a heavy stress in the interpretation. There is nothing in hunger, or thirst, or nakedness, or peril, to invite our contentment. If we are content under such circumstances, it must be from higher motives than our condition itself affords. Hunger is a sharp thorn when in the hands of stern necessity. But hunger may be voluntarily endured for many an hour when conscience makes a man willing to fast. Reproach may have a bitter fang, but it can be bravely endured, when I am animated by a sense of the justice of my cause. Now Paul counted that all the ills which befell him were just incident to the service of his Lord. So for the love he bear to the name of Jesus, the hardships of servitude or self-mortification sat lightly on his shoulders, and were brooked cheerily by his heart.

There is yet a third reason why Paul was content, I will illustrate it. Many an old veteran takes great pleasure in recounting the dangers and sufferings of his past life. He looks back with more than contentment, oftentimes with self-gratulation, upon the terrible dangers and distresses of his heroic career. Yet the smile that lights his eye, and the pride that sits on his lofty wrinkled brow as he recounts his stories, were not there when he was in he midst of the scenes he is now describing. It is only since the dangers are past, the fears have subsided, and the issue is complete, that his enthusiasm has been kindled to a flame. But Paul stood on vantage ground here. "In all these things," said he, "we are more than conquerors." Witness his voyage toward Rome. When the ship in which he sailed was caught and driven before a tempestuous wind; when darkness veiled the skies; when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared; when hope failed every heart;--he alone bore up with manly courage. And why? The angel of God stood by him, and said, Fear not. His faith was predestinarian, and as such, he had as much peaceful contentment in his breast while the

tribulation lasted as when it had closed.

And now I want to commend the lesson of my text very briefly to the rich, a little more at length to the poor, and then with sympathy and counsel to the sick--those who are sore-tried in their persons by suffering.

First, to the RICH. The apostle Paul says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Now some of you have, as far as your circumstances are concerned, all that the heart can wish. God has placed you in such a position that you have not to toil with your hands, and in the sweat of your face gain a livelihood. You will perhaps think that any exhortation to you to be contented is needless. Alas! my brethren, a man may be very discontented though he be very rich. It is quite as possible for discontent to sit on the throne, as it is to sit on a chair--a poor broken-backed chair in a hovel. Remember that a man's contentment is in his mind, not in the extent of his possessions. Alexander, with all the world at his feet, cries for another world to conquer. He is sorry because there are not other countries into which he may carry his victorious arms, and wade up to his loins in the blood of his fellow man, to slake the thrist of his insatiable ambition. To you who are rich, it is necessary that we give the same exhortation as to the poor: "learn to be content." Many a rich man who has an estate is not satisfied, because there is a little corner-piece of ground that belongs to his neighbour, like Naboth's vineyard that the king of Israel needed that he might make a garden of herbs hard by his palace. "What matters it," says he, "though I have all these acres, unless I can have Naboth's vineyard?" Surely a king should have been ashamed to crave that paltry half-acre of a poor man's patrimony. But yet so it is; men with vast estates, which they are scarcely able to ride over, may have that old horse-leech in their

hearts, which always cries, "Give, give! More, more!" They thought when they had but little, that if they had ten thousand pounds it would be enough. They have it: they want twenty thousand pounds. When they have that, they still want more. Yes, and if you had it, it would be "A trifle more!" So would it continually be. As your possessions increased, so would the lust of acquiring property increase. We must, then, press upon the rich this exhortation: "Learn in your state, therewith to be content."

Besides, there is another danger that frequently awaits the rich man. When he has enough wealth and property, he has not always enough honour. If the queen would but make him a justice of the peace for the country, how glorious would my lord become! That done, he will never be satisfied till he is a knight; and if he were a knight, he would never be content until he became a baron; and my lord would never be satisfied till he was an earl; nor would he even then be quite content unless he could be a duke; nor would he be quite satisfied I trow then, unless there were a kingdom for him somewhere. Men are not easily satisfied with honour. The world may bow down at a man's feet; then he will ask he world to get up and bow again, and so keep on bowing for ever, for the lust of honour is insatiate. Man must be honoured, and though king Ahasuerus make Haman the first man in the empire, yet all this availeth nothing, so long as Mordecai in the gate doth not bow down to my lord Haman. Oh! Learn, brethren, in whatever state you are, therewith to be content.

And here let me speak to the elders and deacons of this church. Brethren, learn to be content with the office you hold, not envious of any superior honour to exalt yourselves. I turn to myself, I turn to the ministry, I turn to all of us in our ranks and degrees in Christ's Church; we must be content with the honour, but to content to give it

all up, knowing that it is but a puff of breath after all. Let us be willing to be the servants of the Church, and to serve them for nought, if need be even without the reward of their thanks, may we but receive at last the right good sentence from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must learn, in whatever state we are, therewith to be content. At a little more length I have to counsel the POOR. "I have learned," says the apostle, "in whatever state I am, therewith to be content." A very large number of my present congregation belong to those who labour hard, and who, perhaps, without any unkindly reflection, may be put down in this catalogue of the poor. They have enough--barely enough, and sometimes they are even reduced to straitness. Now remember, my dear friends, you who are poor, there are two sorts of poor people in the world. There are the Lord's poor, and there are the devil's poor. As for the devil's poor: they become pauperized by their own idleness, their own vice, their own extravagance. I have nothing to say to them to-night. There is another class, the Lord's poor. They are poor through trying providences, poor, but industrious,--labouring to find all things honest in the sight of all men, but yet they still continue through an inscrutable providence to be numbered with the poor and needy. You will excuse me, brothers and sisters, in exhorting you to be contented; and yet why should I ask excuse, since it is but a part of my office to stir you up to everything that is pure and lovely, and of good report? I beseech you, in your humble sphere, cultivate contentment. Be not idle. Seek, if you can, by superior skill, steady perseverance, and temperate thriftiness, to raise your position. Be not so extravagant as to live entirely without care or carefulness; for he that provideth not for his own household with careful fore-thought, is worse than a heathen man and a publican; but at the same time, be contented; and where God has placed you, strive to adorn that position,

be thankful to him, and bless his name. And shall I give you some reasons for so doing?

Remember, that if you are poor in this world so was your Lord. A Christian is a believer who hath fellowship with Christ; but a poor Christian hath in his poverty a special vein of fellowship with Christ opened up to him. Your Master wore a peasant's garb, and spoke a peasant's brogue. His companions were the toiling fishermen. He was not one who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. He knew what it was to be hungry and thirsty, nay, he was poorer than you, for he had not where to lay his head. Let this console you. Why should a disciple be above his Master, or a servant above his Lord? In your poverty, moreover, you are capable of communion with Christ. You can say, "Was Christ poor? Now can I sympathize with him in his poverty. Was he weary, and did he sit thus on the well? I am weary too, and I can have fellowship with Christ in that sweat which he wiped from his brow." Some of you brethren cannot go the length you can; it were wrong of them to attempt to do it, for voluntary poverty is voluntary wickedness. But inasmuch as God hath made you poor, you have a facility for walking with Christ, where others cannot. You can go with him through all the depths of care and woe, and follow him almost into the wilderness of temptation, when you are in your straits and difficulties for lack of bread. Let this always cheer and comfort you, and make you happy in your poverty, because your Lord and Master is able to sympathize as well as to succour.

Permit me to remind you again, that you should be contented, because otherwise you will belie your own prayers. You kneel down in the morning, and you say, "Thy will be done!" Suppose you get up and want your own will, and rebel against the dispensation of your heavenly Father, have you not made yourself out to be a hypocrite? The language

of your prayer is at variance with the feeling of your heart. Let it always be sufficient for you to think that you are where God put you. Have you not heard the story of the heroic boy on board the burning ship? When his father told him to stand in a certain part of the vessel, he would not move till his father bade him, but stood still when the ship was on fire. Though warned of his danger he held his ground. Until his father told him to move, there would he stay. The ship was blown up, and he perished in his fidelity. And shall a child be more faithful to an earthly parent than we are to our Father, who is in heaven? He has ordered everything for our good, and can he be forgetful of us? Let us believe that whatever he appoints is best; let us choose rather his will than our own. If there were two places, one a place of poverty, and another a place of riches and honour, if I could have my choice, it should be my privilege to say, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Another reflection suggests itself. If you are poor you should be well content with your position, because, depend upon it, it is the fittest for you. Unerring wisdom cast your lot. If you were rich, you would not have so much grace as you have now. Perhaps God knew, that did he not make you poor, he would never get you to heaven at all; and so he has kept you where you are, that he may conduct you thither. Suppose there is a ship of large tonnage to be brought up a river, and in one part of the river there is a shallow, should some one ask, "Why does the captain steer his vessel through the deep part of the channel?" His answer would be, "Because I should not get it into harbour at all if I did not take it by this course." So, it may be, you would remain aground and suffer shipwreck, if your Divine Captain did not always make you trace the deepest part of the water, and make you go where the current ran with the greatest speed. Some plants die if they are too

much exposed; it may be that you are planted in some sheltered part of the garden where you do not get so much sun as you would like, but you are put there as a plant of his own righteous planting, that you may bring forth fruit unto perfection. Remember this, had any other condition been better for you than the one in which you are, God would have put you there. You are put by him in the most suitable place, and if you had had the picking of your lot half-an-hour afterwards, you would have come back and said, "Lord, choose for me, for I have not chosen the best after all." You have heard, perhaps, the old fable in Aesop, of the men that complained to Jupiter, of their burdens, and the god in anger bade them every one get rid of his burden, and take the one he would like best. They all came and proposed to do so. There was a man who had a lame leg, and he thought he could do better if he had a blind eye; the man who had a blind eye thought he could do better if he had to bear poverty and not blindness, while the man who was poor thought poverty the worst of ills; he would not mind taking the sickness of the rich man if he could but have his riches. So they all made a change. But the fable saith that within an hour they were all back again, asking that they might have their own burdens, they found the original burdens so much lighter than the one that was taken by their own selection. So would you find it. Then be content; you cannot better your lot. Take up your cross; you could not have a better trial than you have got; it is the best for you; it sifts you the most; it will do you the most good, and prove the most effective means of making you perfect in every good word and work to the glory of God.

And surely, my dear brethren, if I need to add another argument why you should be content, it were this: whatever your trouble, it is not for long; you may have no estate on earth, but you have a large one in heaven, and perhaps that estate in heaven will be all the larger by

reason of the poverty you have had to endure here below. You may have scarcely a house to cover your head, but you have a mansion in heaven,--a house not made with hands. Your head may often lie without a pillow, but it shall one day wear a crown. Your hands may be blistered with toil, but they shall sweep the strings of golden harps. You may have to go home often to dinner of herbs, but there you shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, and sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,
So we'll smooth it with hope and cheer it with song."

Yet a little while, the painful conflict will be over. Courage, comrades, courage,--glittering robes for conquerors. Courage, my brother, courage, thou mayest sooner become rich than thou dreamest of; perhaps there is e'en now, but a step between thee and thine inheritance. Thou mayest go home, peradventure, shivering in the cold March wind; but ere morning dawneth thou mayest be in thy Master's bosom. Bear up with thy lot then, bear up with it. Let not the child of a king, who has an estate beyond the stars, murmur as others. You are not so poor after all, as they are who have no hope; though you may seem poor, you are rich. Do not let your poor neighbours see you disconsolate, but let them see in you that holy calmness, that sweet resignation, that gracious submission, which makes the poor man more glorious than he that wears a coronet, and lifts the son of the soil up from his rustic habitation, and sets him among the princes of the blood-royal of heaven. Be happy, brethren, be satisfied and content. God will have you to learn, in whatever state you may be, therewith to be content.

And now just one or two words to SUFFERERS. All men are born to sorrow, but some men are born to a double portion of it. As among trees, so among men, there are different classes. The cypress seems to have been

created specially to stand at the grave's head and be a weeper; and there are some men, and some women, that seem to have been made on purpose that they might weep. There are the Jeremiahs of our race; they do not often know an hour free from pain. Their poor weary bodies have dragged along through a miserable life, diseased, perhaps, even from their birth, suffering some sorrowful infirmity that will not let them know even the gaiety and the frolic of youth. They grow up to mourning, and each year's suffering drives its ploughshare deeper into their brows, and they are apt--and who can blame them?--they are apt to murmur, and they say, "Why am I thus? I cannot enjoy the pleasures of life as others can; why is it?" "Oh!" says some poor sister, "consumption has looked on me; that fell disease has blanched my cheek. Why should I have to come, scarcely able to breathe, up to the house of God, and after sitting here, exhausted with the heat of this crowded sanctuary, to retire to my home, and prepare to engage in daily labour much too heavy for me; my very bed not yielding me repose, and my nights scared with visions and affrighted with dreams?--why is this?" I say it these brothers and sisters mourn, we are not men to blame them, because, when we are sick, we brook it ill, and murmur more than they. I do admire patience, because I feel myself so incapable of it. When I see a man suffering, and suffering bravely, I often feel small in his presence. I wonder, yes, I admire and love this man who can bear pain, and say so little about it. We who are naturally healthy and strong, when we do suffer, we can hardly endure it. Caesar pules like a sick girl, and so do some of the strongest when they are brought down; while hose who are always enduring suffering bear it like heroes,--martyrs to pain, and yet not uttering a complaint. There was good John Calvin, all his life long a victim of sickness; he was a complication of diseases. His visage, when he was a young man, as may be judged of from the

different portraits of him, exhibited the signs of decay; and though he lived a long while, he seemed as if he was always going to die to-morrow. In the deepest of his agony, suffering from severe spinal pains and acute disease, the only cry he was ever known to utter was, "Domine usquequo? How long, Lord? How long, Lord?" A more repining expression than that he never used. Ah! but we get kicking against the pricks, murmuring and complaining. Brothers and sisters, the exhortation to you is to be content. Your pains are sharp, yet "his strokes are fewer than your crimes, and lighter than your guilt." From the pains of hell Christ has delivered you. Why should a living man complain? As long as you are out of hell, gratitude may mingle with your groans.

Besides, remember that all these sufferings are less than his sufferings. "Canst thou not watch with thy Lord one hour?" He hangs upon the tree with a world's miseries in his bowels; cannot you bear these lesser miseries that fall on you? Remember that all these chastenings work for your good; they are all making you ready; every stroke of your Father's rod is bringing you nearer to perfection. The flame doth not hurt thee; it only refines thee, and takes away thy dross. Remember too, that thy pain and sickness have been so greatly blessed to thee already, that thou never oughtest to rebel. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." You have seen more of heaven through your sickness, than you ever could have seen if you had been well. When we are well, we are like men in a clay hut, we cannot see much light; but when disease comes and shakes the hut, and dashes down the mud, and makes the wattles in the wall tremble, and there is a crevice or two, the sunlight of heaven shines through. Sick men can see a great deal more of glory than men do when they are in health. This hard heart of ours, when it is undisturbed,

waxes gross. When the strings of our harp are all unstrung, they make better music than when they are best wound up. There are some heaven-notes that never come to us but when we are shut up in the darkened chamber. Grapes must be pressed before the wine can be distilled. Furnace work is necessary to make us of any use in the world. We should be just the poorest things that can be, if we did not sometimes get sick. Perhaps, you that are frequently tried and frequently pained, would have been scarcely worth anything in the vineyard of Christ, if it had not been for this trial of your faith.

You have a sharp filling, but if you had not been well filed, you would not have been an instrument fit for the Master's use, you would have grown so rusty. If he had kept you always free from suffering, you would have been often lacking those sweet cordials which the Physician of souls administers to his fainting patients.

Be content then; but I feel as if I hardly must say it, because I am not sick myself. When I came to you once, from the chamber of suffering, pale, and thin, and sick, and ill, I remember addressing you from that text, that was blessed to some far away in America,--"If needs be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Then I think I might very justly have said to you, "In whatsoever state you are, be content;" but now that I am not suffering myself, I do not feel as if I can say it so boldly as I could then. But nevertheless, be it so, brothers and sisters; try if you can and imitate this beloved apostle Paul. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Before I dismiss you there is this one other sentence. You that love not Christ, recollect that you are the most miserable people in the world. Though you may think yourselves happy, there is no one of us that would change places with the best of you. When we are very sick,

very poor, and on the borders of the grave, if you were to step in and say to us "Come, I will change places with you; you shall have my gold, and my silver, my riches, and my health," and the like, there is not one living Christian that would change places with you. We would not stop to deliberate, we would give you at once our answer--"No, go your way, and delight in what you have; but all your treasures are transient, they will soon pass away. We will keep our sufferings, and you shall keep your gaudy toys." Saints have no hell but what they suffer here on earth; sinners will have no heaven but what they have here in his poor troublesome world. We have our sufferings here and our glory afterwards; you may have your glory here, but you will have your sufferings for ever and ever. God grant you new hearts, and right spirits, a living faith in a living Jesus, and then I would say to you as I have said to the rest--man, in whatsoever state you are, be content.

Chapter 34

The Jeer Of Sarcasm, And The Retort Of Piety

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 8, 1860,

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,

AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself! And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus and will be base in my own sight: and of the maidservants which you have spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor." 2 Samuel 6:20-22.

You will remember the remarkable passage of Sacred History which I related to you this morning, [See Sermon #307] how David sought on one occasion to bring up the Ark of God from Kirjath-Jearim to Jerusalem; but neglecting God's Law, they put the Ark upon a cart, instead of carrying it upon the shoulders of the Levites. And as one mistake very soon leads to another, when the oxen stumbled, Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the Ark and prevent its falling, and God smote him there for his error and he died. It was an awful moment. The pulse of that vast assembly beating high with solemn festivity, receives a sudden jerk. The trumpet which erstwhile sent forth its cheerful blast, with the sacred melody of cornet, of psaltery and of harp--all are hushed in one instant! Dullness and terror seize the minds of all. They separate to their homes; the Ark is carried into a private house adjoining the

residence of that eminent servant of God, Obed-edom, and there it tarried for the space of three months. David at last recovered his spirits and a second time, having carefully read over God's Law concerning the removal of the Ark, he went down to the house of Obed-edom to carry it away. The priests, this time, lift up the Ark upon their shoulders by means of the golden staves which passed through golden rings and so uphold the Ark. Finding that they were not smitten, but that they lived and were able to carry the Ark, David paused and offered seven bullocks and seven rams as a sacrifice to God. Then, putting off his royal robe, laying aside his grown, he dressed himself like a priest, put on a linen ephod in order that he might have ease in the exercise which he meant to take and so, in the midst of all the people, like the poorest and meanest of them, he went before the Ark, and playing with his harp, he danced before the Lord with all his might.

While he was so doing he passed by his own house, and Michal, his wife, looking out, thought it was a strange thing to see the king wearing so paltry a robe as a linen ephod! She had rather see him arrayed in some goodly Babylonian garment of fine linen; or she desired to see him clothed with his usual garments, and she despised him in her heart. When David came in, the first words she uttered were a taunt--"How glorious was the king of Israel today!" Then she exaggerated what he did--her spleen found vent in sarcasm; she made it out that he had behaved worse than he could have done. He had simply divested himself of his robes and acted like the rest of the people in playing before God, but she accused him of immodesty. This was, of course, but a pitiful satire, he having in all things acted blamelessly, though humbly, like the rest of the people. His reply to her was with unusual tartness. Seldom did he seem to lose his temper for a moment, but in

this case he half did so at any rate. His answer was, "It was before the Lord which chose me before your father, and before all his house." Thus significantly and, as it were, ominously, did he remind her of her pedigree. And because she had slighted her husband when he had acted in God's service according to the dictates of his heart, the Lord struck her with a curse--the greatest curse which an Eastern woman could possibly know--a curse, moreover, which wiped out the last expiring hope of her family pride--she went childless to the day of her death.

Well now, this picture is designed to teach us some wholesome lesson. I want you to look at it. You remember that old saying of ours--"We should expect some danger near, when we receive too much delight." When I see David dancing, I am quite sure there will be a darkening of his heart before long. How happy he looked! His whole countenance radiant with joy! I think I hear him shouting loudest of that crowd, "Sing unto the Lord; sing Psalms unto Him. Sing unto Him. Sing unto Him. Call on His holy name!" And then awakening all the strings of his heart to ecstasy, he sings again, "Sing unto the Lord. Come sing unto Him! Sing Psalms unto His name!" Perhaps he was never in a more holy excitement; his spirits were all heated; he was in a flow of heavenly joy! Ah, David, there is a sting for you somewhere. Now there is a calm, but there is a tempest rising--

"More the treacherous calm I dread,
Than tempests rolling overhead." This joy is on the threshold of a grief. He blesses the people. After he has ceased from his worship of God, he distributes to every man a flagon of wine, and a loaf of bread, and a good piece of meat, and they all eat and are merry before their God. And now David says, "I have blessed the people; I have made them all glad. I will go into my house and I will give them a blessing there." But he is met on the threshold by his own wife, and she in the

most sarcastic manner sneers at him--"How glorious was the king of Israel today!" Poor David is angry, heart-broken and sad. His joy is scattered to the winds for a while; though he puts her off with a rebuke, doubtless the irony went to his soul; the joy of that day was sorely marred--

"A Christian is seldom long at ease,
When one trouble's gone, another does him seize." So says old John Bunyan; and we may truly say, when we are at the top of a mountain, we are not far from the bottom of a valley! When we are riding on the top of one wave, it is not long before we shall be in the trough of another! Uphill and downhill is the way to Heaven! Checkered must be our path; golden shades are interwoven with a black ground. We shall have joy, but we must have trial; we shall have transport, but we must have trouble in the flesh.

This evening I am just going to discourse a little, first, about David's trouble; secondly, the vindication of his conduct, and thirdly, his noble resolution. But my main purpose will be to stir you all up, if you are ever subject to a trial like his, to make his resolve and ground it upon his reasoning .

I. First, DAVID'S TROUBLE. His trouble was peculiar. It came from a quarter where he ought least to have expected it--"Oh," says old master Frampton, "Joab smote Abner under his fifth rib; there is many a man who has been smitten in his rib, too." Another says, "It is a strange strategy of Satan to break a man's head with his own bones, and yet many a man has encountered such rough usage. They who have been the chief joy of our hearts have often been the means of causing us the most grievous pain." Has it not been to many a Christian woman that her husband has been her greatest enemy in religion and many a Christian man has found the partner of his own bosom the hardest obstacle in the

road to Heaven? I will just give you some pictures such as I know to have occurred and to be occurring every day--they will suit some of you now present. A man of God has been up to the Lord's House. There was a great work going on--he helped that work--but when he went home, as soon as he entered the door, Michal, Saul's daughter, was there and she says, "You are mad, you are! You are crazy; you don't know what to do with your money. You give it away to this and to that; and you leave your children beggars. You are a fool," she says, "you are deceived! You have gone mad with your religion." The man puts up with it and bares it patiently, though it enters into his very heart and he turns away sorely troubled. There is another--a woman this time. She went up to the house of her Master's Brothers and Sisters, and they made merry there and there was joy in that place! Her heart was carried away with elevated emotions, and on her road home there is an unspeakable bliss in her soul. As soon as she enters the door, the question is asked, "What brings you home so late?--why didn't you just stay out all night? You look very happy; I dare say you have been among those canting hypocrites, haven't you?" She says nothing--handles it patiently--but the dart has gone into her heart and she feels it sorely that when she serves her God with a good conscience, it is thrown in her teeth as if she had done wrong!

There is many a young man who dances before God with all his might when he has heard about the joyous things of the Covenant of Grace! He has forgotten all his cares, and all his troubles, and he goes back, and perhaps this time it is his own brother, who when they retire to rest, begins to ridicule him. "Where have you been today? How have you been spending your Sunday? I dare say you have been hearing So-and-So! What good can he do you? What has he got to tell you?" And there is a laugh. No names are contemptuous enough; you are called a "fool." It is

supposed that no man in his senses will be a Christian; to think about eternal things is the highest mark of folly--for one short hour to turn one's thoughts away from this poor earth and muse upon eternal things is the mark of madness! Now, we judge the madness on the other side. As we weigh the levities of this life, and the realities of the life to come in the scales of judgment, the madness is found in the extreme on the other hand with the despisers and not with ourselves! The children of this world never did understand the children of the next and they never will. "The light came into the world, and the darkness comprehended it not." How could it--how could darkness do anything to light except oppose it? It could not be expected that they who serve sin should love those who serve righteousness . Oil and water will not mix. Fire and water will never lie to sleep in the same cradle. And it cannot be expected that that man-child, the Church of God, shall have peace and be happy in the same house with that old giant, the Church of Satan--the synagogue of the devil! There must be war and lightning; there must be opposition and conflicts, while there are two natures in the world and two sorts of men!

This, then, was the trial David had to endure. And I want you to notice how peculiarly sharp this trial must have been. Natural affections are so interwoven with a thousand ligaments that they cannot be easily broken. They are delicate as the finest nerves and can never be injured without causing the most dolorous sensation. Surely David must remember that Michal was the wife of his youth, and there was gladness in his heart on the day he married her, and after all, she had been a good wife to him in many respects. Such reflections would make her alienation from him all the harder to bear. "Oh," he might have said, "she preserved my life once at the risk of her own, when I lay sick in bed and her father, Saul, had said, Bring him in the bed even as he is,

that I may slay him.' Did she not let me down the wall in a basket and then lay an image in the bed and stuff the pillar with goat's hair and deceive her father that so I might escape? Ah, there was love in that woman's bosom and how long did she remain faithful while I was hunted like a partridge on the mountains?" It is true he might call to recollection that in his worst times she had forgotten him, but now she had come back to him and David sincerely loved her; for you remember that when Abner wanted to make peace with David, his stipulation was, "Except you bring Michal unto me, I will not see your face," so that he had a thorough affection for her and she had done him good. Yet the delight of his heart is become the foe of his spirit! She it is who now laughs at him for what he had done with a pure desire to serve God, and with a holy joy in doing it. Yes, that is the unkindest cut of all; that goes to the very quick of a man when the one he loves and the one who is worth all his love, notwithstanding throws in his teeth his zeal for Christ! Ah, Brothers and Sisters, it is a happy thing when we are enabled to rejoice together in our family relationships; when husband and wife help each other on the path to Heaven. There can be no happier position than that of the Christian man or woman who finds, in every holy wish he has for God, a helper! He finds that often she outstrips him--that when he would do something, she suggests something more--when he would serve his Master, there is a hint given that more yet might be done and no obstacle put in the way, but every assistance rendered! Happy is that man and blessed is he! He has received a treasure from God, the like of which could not be bought for diamonds, and much fine gold could not be exchanged for it. That man is blessed of the Most High! He is Heaven's favorite and he may rejoice in the special favor of his God!

But, back to our example of David's trouble--"You," she said, "you who

are so cautious in everything else, you seem to have lost your head when you think about your religion." So she will be sarcastic and shoot words like arrows at David in such a way that all of them may cause a wound. And now let me say here, that this is more frequently done by the husband against the wife and still more frequently by the two fellow apprentices or workmen against one another. It is a curious thing that when men are going to Hell, there is no one to stop them. "Make way, make way! Open the toll bars there; stand clear, do not let there be a dog in his path! Make way for him!" Is not that the cry of the world? But here comes a man who wants to go to Heaven--"Block his path up! Throw stones in the way! Block it up; make it as difficult as ever it can be!" Yes, and good people, too, good people not knowing what they are doing--they are employed by Satan to impede our path to Heaven! Poor souls, they do not know better. Satan enters into them and sets them upon us, to see if they cannot in some way or other mar our integrity because we love the whole Gospel and will not be content to have a part only. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a sore trial, but know that your afflictions are not strange or unusual; the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.

II. I shall now turn away from the consideration of the trouble, to look at holy David as he meets and encounters it. We have had David's trial; now we will have DAVID'S JUSTIFICATION. What did David say in extenuation of what he had done? He said, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before your father, and before all his house, and appointed me ruler over the people, over Israel, therefore will I play before the Lord." David's justification of his acts was God's election of him! Do you not see the Doctrine of Election here? God had chosen him before her father Saul. "Now," says David, "inasmuch as by special love and Divine favor I was lifted up from the common people and made a

king, I will stoop down to the common people once again, and I will praise my God as the people do, robed in their vestments, dancing as they dance, and playing on the harp even as the rest of the joyous crowd are doing." Gratitude was the key note of his worship. Let the worldling say of the Christian when he is acting true to his Master, "You are enthusiastic;" our reply is, "Yes, we are. We may be considered enthusiastic if you judge us by ordinary rules, but we are not to be judged so; we consider that we have been loved with special love; that God has been pleased to forgive us our sins, to accept us by His Sovereign Grace, and give us the privileges of His children--

Loved by our God, for Him again
With love intense we burn!
Chosen of Him before time began,
We choose Him in return!'

We do not expect ordinary men to do for God what the Christian would.

No," he says--

"Love I much, I've more forgiven!
I'm a miracle of Grace."

If he gives more to the cause of God than other men think of giving, still it seems very little to him, for he says--

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small!
Love so amazing so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

Michal may say we have acted madly; she would act the same if she felt as we felt. Men of the world may say we act extravagantly, and go beyond the rule of prudence. They would go beyond the rule of prudence, too, if they had been partakers of like love and received like favor! The man who feels himself to have been chosen of God from before the

foundation of the world--who has a solid conviction that his sins are all blotted out; that he is God's own child; that he is accepted in the Beloved; that his Heaven is secure--I say there is nothing extravagant for that man to do! He will go and be a missionary to the heathen, cross the seas with his life in his hands, and live in the midst of a heathen population. Men say, "What for? He calls gain but a miserable pittance to sustain life, after giving up the most flowery prospects. He must be mad." Mad no doubt you may account him, if you judge as Michal judged--but if you consider that God has chosen him and loved him with a special love, it is but reasonable, even less than might have been expected--that such a man is ready to sacrifice for Christ! Take another example. Let me cull a picture from the memoir of one in years gone by. He preaches in a Church in Glasgow; he is just inducted into the Church, preferment lies open before him, he may speedily be made a Bishop if he likes. He seeks it not! Without miter or benefice he takes to Kennington Common and Moorfields--goes to every stump and hedge in the country--so that he is Rural Dean of all the commons everywhere and Canon Residentiary nowhere! He is pelted with rotten eggs; he finds one time that his forehead has been laid open in the midst of a sermon. Why does he do it? Men say he is fanatical. What did Whitefield need to do this for? What did John Wesley need to go all over the country for? Why, there is the Rev. Mr. So-and-So, with his 14 weeks vacation and he never preaches at all--good man he is! "Oh," say the world, " and he makes a good thing of it, depend upon it." That is a common saying, "He makes a good thing of it." And when he died, he did make a good thing of it, for he silenced the tongue of slander, leaving nothing but an imperishable reputation behind! When Mr. Wesley was laboring abundantly, they said, "He is a rich man." And they taxed him very heavily for his plate. He said, "You may take my plate at any

rate if you like, for all I have is two silver spoons. I have one in London and one in York, and by the Grace of God, I shall never have any more as long as there are poor people about." But the people said, "Depend upon it, they are making a good thing of it. Why cannot they be still as other people?" The only reason why they could not was just this--that God had chosen them before the rest of mankind! They felt that they were special objects of Divine favor and they knew their calling--it was not only to make them blessed, but to make them a blessing! What other men could not do, or would not do, they did-- they could not rest before they did it. They could dance like David before the Ark, degrading the clerical character; they could bring down the fine dignity of the parson, to stand like a mountebank before the shows of Moorfields, or in the Spafields' riding-schools. They could come down on stage boards to preach the Gospel! They were not ashamed to be like David, shamelessly uncovering themselves like lewd fellows, in the eyes of the handmaidens of their servants--they thought all this disgrace was honor, and all this shame was glory, and they bore it all, for their justification was found in the fact that they believed God had chosen them! And therefore they chose to suffer for Christ's sake, rather than reign without Christ.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, I say this to you--if you think God has chosen you and yet do not feel that He has done great things for you, or holds any strong claims upon your gratitude, then shun the Cross! If you have never had much forgiven, get over the stile and go down the green land into Bye-Path Meadow. If is comfortable walking; go down there. If you do not owe much to the Lord Jesus Christ, shirk His service; go up in the corner there when the trumpet plays and tell Michal you are very sorry you have displeased her. Say, "I will never do the like again, trust me. I am sorry you do not like it; I hope you

will now forgive me. But as I hold religion to be a thing to please everyone as well as myself, I will never dance before the Ark again."

Do that, now, if you are under no very great obligation to the Father of spirits and have never tasted the distinguishing love of God to your souls. But oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some of you ready to start up from your seats, and say, "Well, I am not that person!" And assuredly, as your pastor, I can look on some of you who have had much forgiven. Not long ago you were up to the throat in drunkenness! You could blaspheme God! Not very long ago, perhaps, you carried on dishonesty and never entered the House of God. Some of you were frivolous, gay, careless, despisers of God, without hope, without Christ, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel! Well, and what brought you here now? Why, Sovereign Grace has done it! You would not have been here if you had been left to yourselves; if God had done no more for you than for other men, you would have been left to go on in the same course as before! Now the shutters are closed; that shop which used to be open all day Sunday is closed. Now the pipe and the beer, or dissipation's more refined, that used to occupy the whole of the Sunday afternoon, with five or six jolly companions, are put away! And there is the Bible, and there is prayer now, and now the oath is not heard as before. I suppose you set this change of character down to Sovereign Grace and you are ready to sing with all of us--

"Grace led my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road!
And new supplies each hour I meet
While pressing on to God!"

Then the mercy you have received is a complete justification for anything that you may do in God's service; any ecstasy that you may feel when you are worshipping Him, and any excess of liberality you may

display when you are engaged in pressing on to the Kingdom of your Lord and Master. If the Church could once feel this, what an influence it would exert! Truly, I may say without the slightest flattery, I never met with any people on the face of the earth who seemed to have a more thorough belief in this fact, who lived more truly up to this Doctrine--that chosen of God and loved with special love, they should do extraordinary things--than those among whom I minister. I have often gone on my knees before God to thank Him for the wondrous things I have seen done by some of the Christians now present. In service they have gone beyond anything I could have asked; I should think that they would have considered me unreasonable if I had requested it! They have done it without request. At the risk of everything, they have served their Master and not only spent all that they could spare, but have even spared what they could ill afford to spare for the service of Jesus! They have given up social comfort and personal ease that they might be serving their Master. Such Brothers and Sisters doubtless meet their reward, and if any should say of them, "It is ridiculous. It is absurd--they are carried away with fanatical zeal," I put this answer in their mouths, "Yes, I should be ridiculous; I should be absurd, if I owed no more to God than you; but He has loved me so that I cannot love Him enough, much less love Him too much. He has loved me at such a rate that I cannot do too much for Him; in fact I feel I cannot do half enough." You being special characters you have given to God special service and God bless you for it; yes, He does bless you in it. Such was David's justification.

III. Not less worthy of our notice was his RESOLUTION, of which I now come briefly to speak. What did he say? Did he draw back and play the coward? Did he bend his back to the lash of rebuke and give up the extravagances of his devotion? No. He said, and said frankly, "I will

yet be more vile than thus and I will be base in my own sight," and so forth. Now God grant your resolution may be the same! Whenever the world reproaches you, say, "Well, I thank you for that word; I will strive to deserve it better--if I have incurred your displeasure by my consistency, I will be more consistent and you shall be more displeased, if you will. If it is a vile thing to serve Christ, I will serve Him more than I have ever done and be viler, still! If it is disgraceful to be numbered with the poor, tried and afflicted people, I will be disgraced! No, the more disgraced I am, the more happy I shall be; I shall feel that disgrace is honor, that ignominy is glory, that shame and spitting from the lips of enemies is but the same thing as praise and glory from the mouth of Christ." Instead of yielding, go forward--show your enemies that you do not know how to go back--that you are not made of the soft metal of these modern times. It is said by an old writer that in the olden times men used to take care of their houses, but now the houses take care of the men. That they used to eat off oaken porringers and then they were oaken men. But now they are willow men--they can bend. They are earthenware men, which can be dashed to pieces. Scarcely in politics, in business, or in religion, have you got a man. You see a lot of things which are called men--who turn the way the wind blows. A number of preachers turn north, south, east and west, just according as the times shall dictate, and their circumstances, and the hope of gain shall drift them. I pray God to send a few men with what the Americans call, "grit," in them--men who when they know a thing to be right, will not turn away, or turn aside, or stop; men who will persevere all the more because there are difficulties to meet or foes to encounter. Lord, bring us men who stand all the more true to their Master because they are opposed--who, the more they are thrust into the fire, the hotter they become! Men who,

just like the bow, the further the string is drawn, the more powerfully will it send forth its arrows, and so the more they are trod upon, the more mighty will they become in the cause of Your Truth against error! Resolve, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in any sort of persecution, to face it with a full countenance! Like a nettle is the persecutor, touch it gently and it will sting you, but grasp it and it hurts you not. Lay hold of those who oppose you, not with rough vengeance, but with the strong grip of quiet decision and you have won the day! Yield no principle, no, not the breadth of a hair of that principle. Stand up for every solitary grain of Truth of God--contend for it as for your life! Remember your forefathers--not merely your Christian forefathers, but those who are your progenitors in the faith as Baptists. Remember those who of old were cast out of the Christian Church with contempt because they would not bend to the errors of their times. Think of the snows of the Alps and call to mind the Waldenses and the Albigenses, your great forerunners! Think again, of the Lollard's, the disciples of Wickliffe; think of your Brethren in Germany, who, not many centuries, no, but a century ago, were sewn up in sacks, had their hands chopped off and bled and died--a glorious list of martyrs! Your whole pedigree, from the beginning to the end is stained with blood! From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been made to suffer the violence of men. And you? Will you yield? Shall these soft times, these gentle ages, take away your pristine valor--make you the coward sons of heroic fathers? No--if you are not called to the sufferings of a martyr--yet bear the spirit of a martyr! If you cannot burn as he did in the flesh, burn as he did in the spirit! If you have nothing to endure but the trial of cruel mockings, take it patiently, endure it joyfully; for happy are you, inasmuch as you are made partakers of the sufferings of your Divine Master! Never, I entreat of

you, grow faint in your course, but bring more of the love of your hearts into the service of your lives. Never yield one little bit of the Truth which God has committed to you! Take up the Cross and bear it! However weighty, however ignominious, carry it manfully! If the father is turned against the child, and the child against the father, weep over it and mourn it. If the husband is turned against the wife, and the wife against the husband, take care that it is not through your own fault. But if it is for Christ's sake, bear it joyfully! Bear it with transport and delight; you are highly honored! You cannot wear the ruby crown of martyrdom and fire--that blazing diadem--but you have got at least a stray jewel out of it! Thank God for it and never shrink; never blush to suffer for His name's sake. And give to every laughing Michal, the answer, "If this is vile, I purpose to be viler still; if this is shameful, I will be more shameful; if this excites your derision, you shall laugh louder than ever. Your opportunities for making fun of me shall never be wanting, till your disposition to ridicule shall be changed."

Oh, that is a glorious way of dealing with adversaries! Is a lion roaring at you? Look at him, and smile, and he will leave off roaring, by-and-by. When some big dog comes out to bark at you, keep quiet; it is marvelous how easily he is tamed. I was once staying in the north of Scotland where there was a ferocious dog chained up. He came out and I patted him and he jumped up with his front paws upon me. I caressed him and he seemed particularly fond of me. The master came out. "Come away, my dear Sir," he said, "that dog will tear you to pieces." But I did not know it, and when I passed by, he seemed to know I was not at all afraid of him, so he didn't meddle with me. In like manner, Christians, be not terrified at your adversaries! They may growl, or they may snarl, but do not shrink back with fear. It will make them bark the

more! Take as little notice of them as possible. Ah, poor things, you can well say, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." Just leave them all alone, and if they must know the reason, tell them what David told Michal--God has chosen you to show forth His praise. I dare say you may be insane enough in their eyes. A good friend of mine, when he was told he was mad, said, "Well, if I am mad, you ought to be very patient with me, for fear I should grow worse. If I am mad, now, perhaps I might grow wild. So be gentle with me." There is a good-humored way of rallying in return--only it must be without bitterness. Tell the people who take needless offense they must try to teach you better. If you have gone so far astray, they ought to lead you back again! By degrees they will have done with this nonsense, and begin to respect you. If there is one in a family who is looked up to most of all, it is usually that one which all the family abused at one time. He has borne the brunt of opposition; he has held his ground; and he has won the palm of consistency. Give way an inch and you will have to give way a mile! Yield a single yard and your enemy will drive you out. Stand right still--calmly, quietly with the determination that you can die--but you will not fly--that you could suffer anything, but you could not deny your Master--and your victory is won!

Never forget to give thanks to God if you are a child of pious parents who, so far from opposing you, have done all they could to help you. Be very thankful for it--as a privilege to be prized--because so many lack it. It is a happy thing for some of you flowers who grow in a conservatory where the air is so very warm and so very mild. But there are some who have to be outside in the frost--pray for these. When you think of the sheep in the fold, take care that you think of those out in the wilderness exposed to the snowstorm coming on; perhaps buried in a hollow and ready to expire. Think of them! You may suppose there is

very little suffering for Christ now--I speak what I know--there is still a vast deal of suffering! I do not mean burning, I do not mean hanging, I do not mean persecution by law. It is a sort of slow martyrdom. I can tell you how it is effected. Everything a young man does is thrown in his teeth; things harmless and indifferent in themselves are twisted into accusation that he does wrong. If he speaks, his words are brought up against him. If he is silent it is worse. Whatever he does is misrepresented and from morning to night there is the taunt always ready; everything that can be said against his minister is generally used--because the world knows when they find fault with the minister, it stings the people, if they are a loving people, to the quick. And there are insinuations thrown out against the minister for his motives, and there are all kinds of things said about God's people, too. One says the minister is a, "yes-no" preacher. Another says he is too high in Doctrine. One will accuse him of being sanctimonious. Another will charge him with laxness. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, you need not fear, you can bear witness for the Truth of God whatever is said--you must bear with the slanderer and forbear. If they throw anything in your teeth, still stand up for your Lord Jesus. I don't ask you to stand up for me. You will do that, I know, but stand up for your Lord and Master. Don't yield a single inch, and the day shall come when you shall have honor even in the eyes of those who in the world once laughed at you and put you to open shame.

Before closing, let me just say a word or two more generally to this whole congregation. There are three sorts of people upon which my text looks with a dark and appalling frown. First, there are those whose lips are always quick to curl; whose countenance is always prompt to sneer; whose tongues are always ready with a profane jest when the service of God crosses their path. I only say to you, beware, lest that

come upon you--"As he loved cursing, so let it come upon him--as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him." Secondly, there are those who up to a certain point favor the worship of God and the services of the Church. But there comes a season of extraordinary service, a revival that demands uncommon energy--and almost before they are aware of it, the repugnance of their hearts finds some strong and unkindly expression. Now let me point you to Saul's daughter and remind you how in one hour she proved her pedigree, identified herself with a family which the Lord had rejected, and sealed her own irrevocable doom! Then, thirdly, there is the professor of religion, who with David's trial is awaiting David's constancy. Have I sown the seed of Gospel Truth broadcast among you so often and has none fallen in stony places? You may have heard the Word and later with joy received it. And you may have "endured awhile, though you have no root in yourselves." But let me ask you, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, are you offended? Does it prove a stumbling block to you? If so, your case is deplorable! Do you parry off the first breath of ridicule with flippant tongue? Did I hear that you said the other day, "Oh, I don't profess anything . I only just go into that Chapel now and then to hear the preacher. He rather takes my fancy." What? Young man, let your conscience witness that you are shrinking back unworthily! You may only dissemble a little at first, but if you are coward enough to dissemble, you may, before long, prove infidel enough to apostatize! Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, in nothing terrified by your adversaries." "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in His name, but also to suffer for His sake." Amen.

Chapter 35

A Divine Challenge!

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 22, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." Exodus 8:1.

ON two or three former occasions I have endeavored to insist upon the fact that God always puts a distinction between Israel and Egypt. He constantly speaks of the Israelites as "My people"--of the Egyptians, he speaks to Pharaoh as being "your people." There is a continual and eternal distinction observed in the Word of God between the chosen seed of promise and the world--the children of the Wicked One. The great objective of God's interference with Egypt was not the blessing of Egypt at large, but the gathering out of His Israel from the midst of the Egyptians. Beloved, I have the conviction that this is just what God is doing with the world now. Perhaps, for many a year to come, God will gather out His elect from the nations of the earth as He gathered His Israel from the midst of the Egyptians. You and I may not live to see that universal reign, of which we so joyously sang this morning; but the wheat will be gathered into the garner, sheaf by sheaf, if not ear by ear. The tares will be left to ripen here, perhaps, until the great and terrible day the Lord comes. At any rate, looking at the signs of the times, we do not see any considerable progress made in the evangelization of the world. Egypt is still Egypt--the world is still the world--and as worldly as it ever was, and God's purpose seems to be, through the ministry which He now exercises, to bring His chosen ones out. In fact, the Word which Jehovah is now speaking to the entire world with the solemn authority of an imperial mandate is this--"Thus

says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me."

It will be necessary in addressing you this evening, to recall to your minds the position which the Israelites held in Egypt. It is a type of the position of all the Lord's people before the Most High God, who with a high hand and an outstretched arm brings them out of their bondage. The people of the Lord are slaves. Though their names are in His book, yet they are slaves, engaged like Israel of old in labors that savor more of earthly than of heavenly things--brick-makers, building houses not for themselves, for they find no city to dwell in. They are toiling and laboring here as unwilling servants, thinking, perhaps, they shall receive goodly wages, but they receive no wages, except the whip upon their shoulders. Every man in his unrenewed state is a slave. Even God's people are slaves as well as others, till they hear the trumpet of jubilee and at the Word and by the power of God are brought forth out of the place of their slavery. We are slaves--slaves to a power which we can never overcome by our own unassisted strength. If all the inhabitants of Goshen--the Israelites, I mean--had concerted measures to rebel against Pharaoh and had said, "We will be free"--in but a few hours, the tremendous power of that great monarch of Egypt would have crushed out the last spark of hope. With his terrible army, his horses and his chariots, the rabble of Israel would soon have been given to the dogs! They had no hope in the world of ever delivering themselves by their own power. Nor more have we, Beloved. By nature we are slaves to him who is infinitely our superior, namely, to Satan and all his hosts of sin. We may sometimes seek to snap the fetter when a hectic flush of health comes over the cheeks, but oh, we may make the fetters grind into our flesh; we cannot snap them! We may even sometimes think that we are free and talk of liberty--but our walk is a walk within a prison and our apparent liberty is but a deeper delusion

of slavery! Men may bid us be free, but they cannot make us so; they may use the best means they can by education, by training, by persuasion, but these fetters are not to be filed by any instruments so weak.

God's ministers may continually exhort us to snap our fetters; but alas, it is not in our power to do what, nevertheless, is their duty to command us to do! We are such slaves, that unless a mightier than ourselves and a mightier than Satan shall come out to our assistance, we must continue in the land of bondage--in the house of our sin and of our trouble. Nor, again, can we ever hope to redeem ourselves with money. If the children of Israel had given up all they had, they were so poor they could not have ransomed their own bodies. The poor brick makers could not buy themselves from their masters; the least thought of such a thing would have brought down the whip with ten-fold fury upon their poor bleeding shoulders. And so you and I may think we can buy our freedom by our good works, but the result of all our offers of purchase-money will be to make us feel the whip the more. You may go and toil and think you have gathered together something that can be acceptable in the sight of your taskmaster--but when you have done all, he will tell you that you are an unprofitable servant, command you to yet sterner labors, make you feel yet viler durance in your prison--for you cannot by such means escape! Really, apart from God, the view of humanity which is given in the Scriptures is the most deplorable picture that even despondency, itself, could paint! Ah, men talk about some remnants of good that are left in humanity, some sparkling of Divine fire and the like, but the Bible does not say so. It expresses, in its solemn words, the meaning of that hymn, which begins--

"How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of her load!

The heart unblest can never rise,

To happiness and God."

The slavery of Israel in Egypt was hopeless slavery; they could not get free unless God interfered and worked miracles in their behalf. And the slavery of the sinner to his sin is equally hopeless--he will never be free--unless a mind that is infinitely greater than he can ever command, shall come to his assistance and help. What a blessed circumstance it is, then, for those poor chosen children of God who are still in bondage, that the Lord has power to say and then power to carry out what He has said--"Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me."

Having thus introduced my subject, by showing you the helpless condition of God's people by nature and the utter impossibility of their ever getting free by themselves, let me observe that today God is saying--saying in His own decree--saying by Providence--and saying through the lips of His faithful ministers, that emancipating sentence which of old made Pharaoh relax his grasp and caused the land of Egypt to loose its captive ones--"Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me."

I shall dwell upon this emancipating sentence tonight, as God shall give me strength, in this way. I shall first notice the fullness of the sentence; then the rightness of the sentence; next, the repetition of it; and finally, the Omnipotence which is concealed in it

I. First, then, THE FULLNESS OF THE SENTENCE. "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." I don't doubt but what there are some of God's people here tonight who have not any idea they are His people. Perhaps they are slaves to drunkenness, bondslaves to every evil passion, yet, being bought by the blood of Christ, their names are in His book, and they must, and they shall be saved! They think,

perhaps, that they never, never can be; it may even happen that they have not any desire to be! But Israel shall come out of Egypt even though Israel may love the flesh-pots, the garlic, and the cucumber. Israel shall be delivered by might and by power, even though Israel may blindly imagine that she is at peace, and at ease in the enemy's land--that is to say, God will have His own people! Though they are content in their sin; though they have no will towards Him; yet He will come and make them discontented with their sins. He will turn their wills--change the bias of their hearts, and they who once despised God, shall, with free consent, against their natural inclination, be led captives at the wheels of His Sovereign Grace! God not only saves those who are willing to be saved, but those who are unwilling to be saved He can make willing in the day of His power! There have been many instances of that in this House of Prayer. Men have come in here merely from curiosity--to laugh, to make jests and fun--but God has had His time and when that time has come--"Thus says the Lord, let My people go free"-- they have gone free! They have been saved! Their fetters which they were unconsciously wearing before, have begun to grate upon their soul, to eat their flesh and then they have sought mercy. And their fetters have fallen off, and they have gone free!

Well, then, though I have run away from what I was going to say, I come again to this point--the fullness of the Divine sentence, "Let My people go free." If you notice, it does not say, "Let them have parti?lliberty; let them have two or three days' rest from their toil." No, but, "Let them go free," free altogether! God's demand is not that His people should have some little liberty, some little rest in their sin--no, but that they should go right out of Egypt and that they should go through the wilderness to Canaan! The demand was not made to Pharaoh, "Make their tasks less heavy; make the whip less cruel; put

kinder taskmasters over them." No, but, "Let them go free." Christ did not come into the world merely to make our sins more tolerable, but to deliver us from them! He did not come to make Hell less hot, or sin less damnable, or our lusts less mighty--He came to put all these things far away from His people and work out a full and complete deliverance! Perhaps Pharaoh might have said at length, "Well, they shall have kind masters; their tasks shall be shortened; they shall have the straw given them, with which to make their bricks." Yes, but Devil, this will not do! You may consent to it, but God never will! Christ does not come to make people less sinful, but to make them leave off sin altogether--not to make them less miserable, but to put their miseries away and give them joy and peace in believing in Him! The deliverance must be complete, or else there shall be no deliverance at all!

Again--you will mark, it says, "Let My people go." It says nothing about their coming back again. Once gone, they are gone forever! Pharaoh thought he would let them go two or three days journey, yet they never went back to Egypt again. They went through the wilderness 40 years to the Promised Land and no Egyptian could ever drive them back. Egypt went forth with all its chivalry to overtake them, but they perished in the Red Sea--and Israel went through as on dry land and was blessed of God. That sentence which said of me, "Let My child go free," gave me eternal liberty; not liberty for yesterday and today and tomorrow, but liberty forever and forever! You know when the Negro slaves run away from the Southern States and get to the North they are free; but still the man-hunter will soon be on their track and they may be taken back again to their masters. Yes, but you and I are like the slave when he gets to Canada. When he sets his foot on British soil and breathes the English air, that moment he is free! Once ferried over the

stream that parts the land of slaves from the land of freedom, he stands on soil that cannot be stained by the slave's foot; he breathes an air that never was received into lungs that were in bondage yet. He is free! And so is it with us. We go not into slave states where the devil has got a fugitive law to hunt us up, again, but into states where we are wholly free. There is not a fetter left. We have not a chain upon our wrist with half of it filed away, but we are free--the free men of God--and Satan has no claim, no right, no, no power, ever to enslave us again! "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." It is a large demand because it is a demand that requires entire liberty and that liberty perpetual, too.

But, I think, I hear one say, "Well, I have not yet entered into the fullness of that sentence." No, Brother, nor have I yet--into the fullness of it--though I have into some of the sweetness of it! You must know that this emancipation is often gradual in our own experience, though it is effectual and instantaneous in God's mind. Time was--and let me speak to you to whom I can speak, whose experience will agree with what I utter--time was when you were born slaves to hardness of heart. You despised God--religion was a toil for you--in fact you never exercised your mind or will with it. Well, there came a time when the Lord said, "Let My people go free," and you began to think. Your heart began to melt. You groaned under the burden of sin, you began to cry to God! You were delivered, then, from the hardness of your heart and were free. But still sin tormented you; your guilt went with you every day like your own shadow; and like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, it drew your curtains tight and put its finger upon your eyelids, as if to crush darkness into your very heart! But the day came when, standing at the foot of the Cross, you saw your sins atoned for, "numbered on the scapegoat's head of old;" you felt the

burden roll from your back, you were free--free from your past sins and you could rejoice in that most glorious liberty! But, then, after a season, you went out into the world and you felt that, "when you would do good, evil was present with you." How to willyou found, but how to do you found not! Well, you have had partial deliverance from that, as one evil passion has been overcome and a virtue has been learned. You have achieved a triumph over one bad habit and a victory over another evil temper. The sentence has been going on, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." And remember, the day is coming when you shall lay dying; yes, but you shall then begin to live! There shall be heard a Voice speaking by your death pillow saying, "Loose him, and let him go." You will understand what that means and in a moment, loosed from every fetter, like Lazarus when the napkin was taken from his head and the grave clothes from his feet, you start up perfectly free! There shall not be a shadow of bondage about you; you shall fly to Heaven and walk its free and happy streets and never more shall you say, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I say, therefore, we don't know in all its fullness the meaning of this passage experimentally. Still it is all ours and we ought to receive it all by faith, as being our precious blessing. God has said to sin, to Satan, to death, to Hell, to doubts, to fears, to evil habits and even to the grave itself-- "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

II. So much, then, for the fullness of the demand; I shall now notice, in the second place, the RIGHTNESS OF IT. The Lord had a perfect right to say to Pharaoh, "Let My people go free." Tyrannical despot! What right had he to enslave a free nation? They came down there by the invitation of his predecessor. Did not Pharaoh invite Jacob and his family to come down to the land of Goshen? It was never in the

stipulation that they should be made slaves! It was a violation of a national compact for Pharaoh to exact toil from free-born Israelites. Had they been brave and strong enough, they ought to have resisted the encroachments of his tyranny. They were not Pharaoh's people; Pharaoh never chose them; he had never brought them where they were; he had not fought with them and overcome them. They were not captives in war, nor did they dwell in a territory which was the spoil of fair conflict. They were guests--honored guests--invited to come and to dwell in a land which they, themselves, enriched and blessed by their representative, Joseph. It was not right, then, that they should be in bondage--there was no right on Pharaoh's part. The right lay exclusively with God. You notice the lightness of the demand concentrated in that little word, "My"--"Let My people go free. Let your own people kiss your feet if they will--make them dig canals and build pyramids if you like, for I interfere not with them. But Mypeople--let them go free! You have no right to their unpaid toil. They have no right to endure this cruel servitude. "Let Mypeople go free."

Do you see the parallel in our case? The Word of God is His own heavenly mandate. The Voice ofjustice and pity and mercy, cries to death and troll and sin, "Let My people go free--Satan, keep your own if you will, but let My people go free, for they are Mine. This people have I created for Myself--they shall show forth My praise. Let My people go free, for I have bought them with My precious blood. You have not bought them, nor have you made them--you have no right to them. Let My people go free." All this is our comfort for poor sinners and we hope that some of them, though they don't know it, are God's people. You must not imagine when you hear a man swear, or when he is going on in sin-- you must not write his name down in the black book and say, "I

am quite sure that man will go to the devil." No! It may be that God ordains to save that man, and one of these days you will meet him lifting up his voice in prayer, outstripping you, perhaps, in the heavenly race and serving his Master better than you have done! Jesus Christ takes many to His bosom whose company we would have shunned when they were in their evil state. Sovereign Mercy can dash into the prize ring and make captives. Free Grace can go into the gutter and bring up a jewel. Divine Love can rake a dunghill and find a diamond! There is no spot where God's Grace cannot and will not go! This, we pray, is our great hope when we have a congregation before us--not a hope that they will be willing, that they will be attentive in themselves, that they will give heed to what we say, but our hope is this--"Doubtless God has much people in this city"--and God having brought some of these within the sound of His Word, we have a hope that many are His chosen ones and God will have them!

I trust we never entertain a doubt but that God will have His own, and that Christ will say as we preached to you this morning, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." "They shall be Mine," says the Lord--"they are Mine now and they shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." Lost though God's elect are, they never belonged to Satan! They were lost, but that does not say they belong to the finder. A thing may be lost, but it is still mine when I have lost it; that is to say, I have a right to it and any man finding it and appropriating it, has no right to do so. If I leave a piece of land having a right to it and another shall take possession for a time, yet if I hold the title deeds, I will have him ousted and take my property. The Lord has got the title deeds of some of you, though the devil has got possession of you! Satan rules you with a rod of iron and makes you his captives and willing servants; but my Master is a match for your master! There has been a great duel

fought between life and death for you, and life has won the victory and Free Grace claims the prize! And that prize Free Grace will give and your poor guilty soul shall yet be set as a signet on Jehovah's hand and shall yet glitter as a jewel in Jehovah's crown! Oh, how I delight to talk about this Omnipotence of Grace--of that Grace that does not tarry for the sons of men, that does not stop, but rides on in triumph and leads captivity itself captive! Oh, what a joy it is to think that we have not to wait on man--that it does not rest with man whether he should belong to Christ or not. If Christ has bought that man--if the Father has ordained him to be Christ's--then Christ's that man shall be! Rampart yourselves about with prejudices, but Christ shall scale your ramparts. Pile up your walls, bring up the big stones of your iniquity--but Christ shall take your citadel and make you a captive. Plunge into the mire if you will, but that strong arm can bring you out and wash you clean!

I see you curl your lips, and say, "I shall never be a Methodist! I shall never make a profession of religion." I don't know, Sir. Many have said the same as you are saying, and yet they have been brought down, and if Christ wills, He can bring you down, too, Sir! There is not strength enough in sin to overcome His Grace. When He puts forth His arm, down you fall. Let Him but once strike, and you may stand and rebel, but the victory is His. You may will to be damned, but if He wills to save you, His will is more than a match for your will, and you will come crouching down to His feet, saying, "Lord, I will that You save me." Then, I think He will say this, "How is it you were not willing then! How is this that you are willing now?" "O Lord, You have made me willing and unto You be all the Glory forever and forever!" So then, we need not say more. I think about the rightness of this sentence of God. They are His people, they are His blood-bought people.

He created them for Himself, and it is neither more nor less than right that God should say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me."

III. Let me now call your attention to THE REPETITION OF THIS SENTENCE. I have just read carefully through these first chapters of Exodus, and I am not quiet sure how many times this phrase occurs, but some five or six times I know it is repeated. The first time, Moses said, "Thus says Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, let My people go, that they may feast before Me in the wilderness." The second time, he says, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me." Some five or six times Moses went unto Pharaoh. The first time he said it, Pharaoh laughed in his face. "You are idle," he said, "you are idle. You don't like your brick-making. You want to go and serve your God to get an idle holiday. Go to your tasks, the taskmasters had need make the toil a little more rigorous. What business have you with religion? Go on with your bricks." Now, that is how the worldling taunts you, when for the first time that sentence comes into his head. "Your religion," he says, "your religion? Go to your shop, take down your shutters on a Sunday and see whether you can't earn an honest living. Go on with your bricks. What business have you to talk about feasting before God in the wilderness? It is all romance." And, you know, we hear worldlings say to us poor Christians that we don't know what real life is. Of course we don't--"reallife"--well, when putrid carrion is the representation of real life, we may be pretty content with our ignorance! Vain show! Vain disquietude! Vain question! Such was the Psalmist's picture. That is the real life of the world, but we want a better life than that--a life more true and real, too, though the world despises it. Brick-making, brick-making, brick-making--that is Pharaoh's joy and so it is with the sinner before he is renewed-- money-making, dirt-making, heaping

together to himself bricks that he may build for himself a fortune. Oh, don't these fellows turn round and look with supreme contempt on us poor fellows--that we should think that eternity is better than time? That God is better than the devil? That holiness is better than sin? That the pleasures of Heaven are better than the poor pomps and vanities of this world? Such simpletons as these will look down and say, "Poor fellow, he does not know better." They, indeed, are the rational men, the intellectual men--they are, in fact, the king Pharaoh. Pharaoh gives a laugh, a hoarse laugh, "Let My people go free?" Yes, but there will come a blow in your face that will make you laugh after another fashion, by-and-by. You with others shall join in weeping, and crying, and tears, and you, with all your chivalry, shall sink into the waters, and you shall go down, and the Red Sea shall swallow you up!

Moses goes to Pharaoh yet again and says, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." And at one time the haughty monarch says he will let some go; at another time he will let them all go, but they are to leave their cattle behind. He will hold on to something. If he cannot have the whole, he will have a part. It is amazing how content the devil is if he can but nibble at a man's heart. It does not matter about swallowing it whole--only let him nibble and he will be content! Let him but bite at the ends and be satisfied, for he is wise enough to know that if a serpent has but an inch of bare flesh to sting, he will poison the whole. When Satan cannot get a great sin in, he will let a little one in, like the thief who goes and finds shutters all coated with iron and bolted inside. At last he sees a little window in a chamber. He cannot get in, so he puts a little boy in, that he may go round and open the back door. So the devil has always his little sins to carry about with him to go and open back doors for him! And we

let one in and say, "O, it is only a little one." Yes, but how that little one becomes the ruin of the entire man! Let us take care that the devil does not get a foothold, for if he gets but a foothold, he will get his whole body in and we shall be overcome.

Observe now, as Pharaoh would not give up the people, the sentence had to be repeated again and again and again, until at last God would bear it no longer, but brought down on him one tremendous blow. He smote the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength and then He led forth His people like sheep by the hands of Moses and Aaron. In like manner, Friends and Brethren, this sentence of God has to be repeated many times in your experience, and mine. "Thus, says the Lord, let My people go free," and if you are not quite free, don't despair--God will repeat that sentence till at the last you shall be brought forth with silver and gold and there shall not be a feeble thought in all your soul! You shall go forth with gladness--and with joy you shall enter into Canaan, at last--up yonder where His Throne is glittering now in glorious light that angel eyes cannot bear! It is no wonder then, if it is to be repeated in our experience, that the Church of Christ must keep on repeating it in the world as God's message. Go, Missionary, to India, and say to Juggernaut and Kalee and Brahma and Vishnu, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go free." Go, you servants of the Lord, to China. Speak to the followers of Confucius and say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go free." Go to the gates of the harlot city, even Rome, and say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." Think not, though you die, that your message will die with you! It is for Moses to say, "Thus says the Lord," and if he is driven from Pharaoh's sight the, "Thus says the Lord," still stands, though His servant falls! Yes, Brothers and Sisters, the whole Church must keep on throughout every age, crying, "Thus says the Lord, let My

people go." We must continue to send our missionaries to lands like Madagascar, where the people of God are speared by hundreds and they must say to the haughty queen, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." We must still send our Livingstones and our Moffats through all the wastes of Africa--

"Through her fertile plains, Where superstition reigns, And binds the man in chains."

And they must continue to say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." Our Brethren must continue in the theatres and in the streets--in the highway and in the byway--saying, not in so many words, but still in fact, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." And it will be a happy time for the Church when every minister feels that he is sent of God--and when he speaks as Moses did! Conscious of Divine authority, he looks sin and evil and error in the face and says, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." When we are called to enter a protest against an error, we shall sometimes be disappointed, because people don't see with us. Very well, very well; but when we have entered the protest we have done all. It was not meant to convince the Egyptians, but it was meant to compel them--"Thus says the Lord, let My people go." When there is a pretended Church of Christ, wherein error is preached, the Christian minister is bound faithfully to point out the error, confident that God's people will hear the warning voice and come out of Babylon. And as for the rest, they must remain where they are, for the mandate is to those whom it concerns--those in whom the Lord has an interest, the people who are His "portion" to go.

IV. Now, my last point, which must, as time and strength alike fail me, be brief--is this--THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE COMMAND--"Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." "They shall never go," says Pharaoh; and his counselors say, "Yes, so be it, O king, they shall

never depart out of this land." "By my father I swear," says the king of Egypt, "they shall be my slaves forever." "Back, back, you sons of the Hebrew shepherds, to your bricks and to your clay! Dare not to stand before Pharaoh's son and dictate to him! I swear by my father's bones again, you shall never go free." Behold, the rivers of Egypt run with blood! There is no fish in Egypt to be found through all the land and the Egyptians loathe to drink the waters of the river which they once worshipped, for it is full of blood. Now, come these two troublesome men in once more before Pharaoh--"Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews, let My people go, that they may serve Me." The king pauses a minute--his haughty soul relents. "You may serve God in the land," says he, "but you shall not go out of the land; you may have a three days rest and serve your God." "No," says Moses, "we cannot serve God in the land of your abominations, and we would be an abomination to you as well as you to us. We must go." Then the king tells them to be gone. They may go. He holds a counsel of wise men and they determine while they have breath left, they will never lose their claim upon those slaves who have so long served them and built such mighty cities. Yes, Pharaoh, but God is mightier than you! Open wide your gates, you hundred-gated Thebes, and send out your myriads of armed men swarming like locusts on a summer's day! Come up, you mighty hosts of Zoar, and you troop of populous No! Come up like swarms of frogs from old Nile! Come up against them and they shall break you-- you shall be as potter's vessels before them--for His redeemed must and shall go free! And now I stand tonight to many among yourselves in the position of Amram's son of old, and it is my business and that of all God's minister's, to cry to Satan, to sin, to Rome, to Mohammed, to idolatry, to every evil--"Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." We hear the hoarse laughter; we listen to the cry of the

kings of the earth as they stand up and the rulers take counsel together. Do you see the priests with their treacherous devices--the sons of Belial now plotting in the dark to destroy us? Yes, and we may go on to be broken in pieces; we may go onward like the sea, but the Rock stands fast and shall send us on and they shall know that there is a God who is greater than they all! Just as all Israel came forth in spite of the determination of Pharaoh, so shall all God's elect be saved, despite the power of Satan, of evil men, of false priests and false prophets! "Thus says the Lore, let My people go," and go they must and shall!

And now, my dear Hearers, have you ever heard the Voice of God speaking in your hearts, "Let My people go"? There are some here tonight who have never been made free--no, what is worse than that--they think they are free while they are the slaves to sin! You think you are free, but this is the worst part of your slavery. You dream that you are saved while you are standing over the mouth of Hell--and this is the worst part of your danger--that you think you are saved. Ah poor souls, poor souls! Your gilded slaveries going to the ale-house and the tavern, to the seat of the scornful, drinking down sin as the ox drinks down water, the thought starts within me--"there will be an end to all that and what will they do when the end shall come?" When your hairs grow gray and your bodies become feeble, when you are drawing near the grave, what will your worldly pleasures do for you then? There was a young man died, not long ago, of extreme old age. I am not contradicting myself--that young man died of extreme old age some time ago at the age of twenty-six. He had sinned himself into the grave and into Hell by a course of debauchery and sin. Perhaps you are not such a fast sinner as that, but you are taking in the poison by slower degrees. But what will you do when the poison begins to work--when sin

begins to pull out the core of your spirit, when the froth has been swept from your cup and you begin to taste its dregs. Yes, when you are dying, you will want to set that cup down, but there will be an evil hand that will thrust it to your mouth and say, "No, no, you have drunk the sweets, and now you must drink the bitters!" Though there is damnation in every drop, yet to the dregs must you drink that cup which you have begun to drink now! Oh, for God's sake, dash it to the ground--have done with it! "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." There is yet hope! There is yet mercy! Sin is a Pharaoh, but God is Jehovah! Your sins are hard--you cannot overcome them of yourself--but God can! He can overcome them for you. There is yet hope! Let that hope awaken you to action. Say to your soul tonight, "I am not in Hell, though I might have been. I am still on praying ground and pleading terms and now, God helping me, I will begin to think." And when you begin to think, you will begin to be blessed! There are more souls lost by thoughtlessness than anything else. If you want to go to Heaven, there are a great many things to think of. If you want to go to Hell, it is the easiest thing in the world. You can go and swear and drink as you like; it is only a little trifling matter of neglect to destroy your soul. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Well, then, if you begin to think, let me propose to you just this. The way of salvation is mapped out before your eyes tonight. He who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. To believe is to trust. Trust Him who hangs upon the tree, and you are saved! Just as you are--guilty, helpless, weak and ruined--give up your soul to Christ! Ah, while I am thus advising you, I think I hear the Voice behind me saying, "My servant, you are speaking according to My will and pleasure, for I, too, am saying in the heart of your hearers, 'Go free.' I, too, am saying to their enemies, 'Thus says the Lore, let

My people go.'"

Be it so, good Lord, and may my voice be but as Your voice! Rise, you slaves of Satan, and be free! Break your bonds asunder and be delivered! Jesus comes to rescue you; His arm is strong, and His heart is tender. Trust Him and be free! Oh, may God grant you Grace that you may be free, now, and find Him, whom to find is to find everlasting life! Amen.

Chapter 36

Vile Ingratitude!

A Sermon

(No. 323)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, May 27th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

"Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations."--Ezekiel 16:1-2.

AND HOW THINK YOU did the prophet proceed in order to accomplish the solemn commission which had been thus intrusted to him? Did he begin by reminding the people of the law which was delivered to Moses on the top of Sinai? Did he picture to them the exceeding fearfulness and quaking of the leader of Israel's host when he received that stony law in the midst of thunders and lightnings? Or did he, do you think, proceed to point out to them the doom which must inevitably befall them, because they had broken the divine law, and violated God's holy statutes? No, my brethren; if he had been about to show to the then unprivileged gentiles their iniquity, he might have proceeded on legal grounds; he was now however about to deal with Jerusalem, the highly-favoured city, and here he does not bring to their mind the law; he does not begin dealing out law-thunders to them at all; he fetches obligations as his arguments to convince them of sin from the grace of God, rather than from the law of God. And, my brethren, as I am about this evening to address you who profess to be followers of the Son of God, and who by faith have "fled for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel,"--as my business is to convince you of sin, I shall not begin by taking you to Sinai,--I shall not attempt to show you what the law

is, and what that penalty is which devolves upon every man that breaks it; but, feeling that you are not under the law, but under grace, I shall draw arguments from the grace of God, from his gospel, from the favour which he has shown to you--arguments more powerful than any which can be fetched from the law, to show you the greatness of your sin, and the abomination of any iniquity which you have committed against the Lord your God. I shall take Ezekiel's method as my model, and proceed to copy it thus:--First, let us consider the abomination of our sin, aggravated as it is by the remembrance of what we were when the Lord first looked upon us; secondly, let us see our sins in another light--in the light of what the Lord has made us since those happy days; and then, let us proceed to notice what our sins have themselves been; and we shall have, I think, three great lamps which may cast a terrible light on the great wickedness of our sins.

I. First, then, let us consider our iniquities--I mean those committed since conversion, those committed yesterday, and the day before, and to-day--and let us see their sinfulness in the light of what we were when the Lord first looked upon us. In the words of the prophet Ezekiel, observe what was our "birth and our nativity." He says of us, "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canan. Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." Now, Canaan, as you know, was a cursed one, and the land of Canaan here meant, refers to the cursed people whom God utterly gave up to be destroyed with the sword, that not one of them might escape. Mark it, our nativity and our birth were of the land of the curse. "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." Though when the Lord is speaking of his people as they are in covenant with him, he tells them that their father was Abraham, whom he did choose, and their mother was Sarah whom he loved; yet when he speaks of their natural estate, he compares their parentage to that

mixed offspring of an Amorite father and a Hittite mother. Ay, and what was our parentage, men and brethren? Let us look back and wonder. Surely our father Adam's wickedness was in us. Our early childhood began to discover the latent sparks of our sin. Scarcely do we remember the time when they were sparks, so early were they fanned into a flame. When any of you look back to your father's house, to the place from which God called you, you may be constrained to wonder, for I know there are many members of this church here present who are the only ones out of a family who were ever called to know the Lord. Your father, perhaps, lived and died a drunkard. You can look back to the two or three that you remember of your ancestors, and they have been "without God and without hope, strangers to the commonwealth of Israel." Then what was there in you or in your father's house that God should set his love on you? Indeed, as for those of us who have been blessed with pious parents, we have nothing to boast of our ancestry, for we all were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity."

Hath the Lord loved us, though there was nothing in our birth or parentage to invite regard or merit esteem? Then surely every sin that we commit now, is aggravated by that sovereign choice, that infinite compassion that doated upon us, though our birth was vile, and our original base. Didst thou take me from the dunghill, O my God, and do I sin against thee? Didst thou take the beggar in his rags and lift him up to make him sit among thy sons and daughters, the very blood-royal of heaven? And has that beggar afterwards become a rebel against thee? Oh sin, thou art an accursed thing indeed! When I think of that grace which has thus honored the dishonorable, exalted the mean things of this world, and saved creatures that were the offscouring of creation, how I blush for the ingratitude that can forget such tender obligations, and do despite to such extraordinary unmerited goodness!

Further, the prophet goes on to say that not only their parentage was base, but their condition was dangerous in the extreme. That which was absolutely necessary for the life of an infant had in this case been utterly neglected. The babe had been cast away as though it were useless, and its life unworthy of preservation. Offspring deserted, having none to tend it or care for its welfare, may perhaps awaken the lowest, the most contemptuous kind of pity. Was not that just our condition when the Lord looked upon us? We had not been severed from the old natural stock of Adam; there had been no water used to wash us from our natural pollution, or to make our conscience supple, our neck pliant, or our knees bend before the power of grace. We had not been swaddled or cared for. There was everything in our condition that would tend to destruction, but nothing in us that would tend upwards towards God. Yet there we were, dying, nay dead, rotten, corrupted, so abominable that it might well be said, "Bury this dead one out, of my sight," when Jehovah passed by and he said unto us, "live." Oh! some of you can remember how you were steeped up to the very neck in lust. Pardon me, brethren, when I allude to these things that you may be led to see your present sins in the light of the mercy which has blotted out your past iniquities. It is not long since with some of you that oaths larded your conversation daily, you could scarcely speak without blasphemy; as for others of us who were preserved from open sin, how base were we! The recollection of our youthful iniquity crushes us to the very earth. When we think how we despised the training we received, could laugh at a mother's prayers and contemn all the earnest tender exhortations which a godly parent's heart afforded to us, we could hide ourselves in dust and ashes and never indulge another thought of self-satisfaction. Yet though sovereign mercy has put all these sins away; though love has covered all these iniquities, and though

everlasting kindness has washed away all this filth, we have gone on to sin. We have gone on to sin--thank God not to sin as we did before, not so greedily, not as the ox drinketh down water;--still we have transgressed, and that in the light of mercy, which has "blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins. Our sins, since redemption was revealed to our souls, are abominations indeed! If I had known, O my brethren, in that hour when Christ took away my sin--if I had known what an untoward disposition I had then to show, and what broken vows I should have now to reflect upon, I do not think I could have borne the revelation. If some of us who are here present, rejoicing in covenant love and mercy, could have a clear view of all the sins we have committed since conversion, of all the sins we shall commit till we land in heaven, I question whether our senses might not reel under the terrible discovery of what base things we are. I am sure if any man had told me that my heart would ever grow cold, that I should ever forget my Lord and Master, and get worldly--if an angel from heaven had told me these things, in the day when I first saw his face and looked and loved and lived, I should have said, "Is thy servant a dog that I should do this thing?" When I sat down and viewed the flowing of his precious blood and knew that my sins were put away, I thought I should never sin against him any more. I dreamed, and was it only a dream, that I should spend and be spent in his service; that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great. And here we find ourselves flinching, and drawing back, and finding excuses for leaving his service; nay, worse than that, smiting the face of our best Friend and grieving his Holy Spirit, and often causing him to hide his face from us by reason of our sin. Well might Moses say, "I beseech thee, O Lord, show me not my wretchedness."

One thing else appears designed to represent our sins as blacker still.

It appears from the fifth verse, that this child, this Jewish nation, when God loved it had none other to love it. "None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion on thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born." Do any of you know what it is to be cast out to the loathing of your person? We will not say that our character had become such that we were loathed by others, but well we remember the time when we loathed ourselves; when we could say with John Banyan that we wished we had been a dog or a toad sooner than have been a man, because we felt ourselves so vile in having sinned against God. Oh! I can recollect the season when my fondest wish was that I had never been born, because I so sinned against God. The sight of my iniquity was such, that horror took hold of me and amazement of soul overwhelmed me. I was indeed cast out to my own loathing if not to the loathing of others; and indeed it is no wonder if a man, when he has his eyes opened, loathes himself, for there is nothing so loathsome as an unregenerate heart--a heart that is like a den of unclean birds full of all manner of filthiness and ravenousness. The greatest abomination that ever existed physically is not to be compared with the moral abominations that dwell in the unrenewed heart. It is a miniature hell, it is pandemonium in embryo; you have but to let it grow, and the vileness which is in the human heart by nature would soon make a hell if there were no hell; and yet, my brethren, when we were loathed, when even our person was loathed, he loved us. Great God I how couldst thou love that which we ourselves hated? Oh! tis grace, tis grace, tis grace indeed! Where is free-will, my brethren; where is free-will? There is no such thing. "Nomen est sine re," said Martin Luther, it is a name for nothing. When we think of what we were; the thought of merit vanishes; it at once refutes itself the moment we look it in the face.

It was grace--free, rich, unconstrained, sovereign grace which looked on us. I am sure if there be any who think there was some good thing in them that invited God's attention, or led him to look upon them, I can only say I know there was nothing of the sort in me; there was everything to hate, nothing to desire; everything to detest, nothing to delight in; much that he might spend his hatred on, but nothing which could command his affection or his love; still he loved us, still he loved us, and yet--O ye heavens be astonished--yet we have sinned against him since then, we have forgotten him, we have doubted him, we have grown cold towards him; we have loved self at times better than we have loved our Redeemer, and have sacrificed to our own idols and made gods of our own flesh and self-conceit, instead of giving him all the glory and the honor for ever and for ever.

This is putting sin in a gospel light. I pray you, brethren, if my speech be feeble and I cannot make the light shine on these things, spend a little season, as you can, in retirement when you are at home, look at your sins in the light of the mercy which looked on you when you were thus dead, and lost, and hopelessly ruined. And surely the blush will mantle on your cheek, and you will bow your knee with many a tear, and cry, "Lord have mercy upon me! O, my, Father cast not away thy child! forgive a child that spurned his Father's love! forgive a wife who has played the harlot against a divine husband! pardon a soul that has been traitorous to its own Lord,--to him who is its life, its joy, its all! "

II. We must now pass on to another point. We have to think of what the Lord has done for us since the time he first loved us. I have made a mistake, brethren; I have made a mistake. "The time when he first loved us," did I say ! Why, before all time, when there was no day but the unrising unsetting day of eternity, a beginning that knew no beginning,

years that had no date. He loved his people then. I meant to refer rather to THE TIME WHEN HE BEGAN TO MANIFEST HIS LOVE TO US PERSONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY. Well then, observe, that one of the chief things he did to us was to spread his skirt over us, and cover our nakedness. He washed us with the water of regeneration, yea, and truly washed away the stain of our natural sanguinity. Oh, that day, that day of days, as the days of heaven upon earth, when our eyes looked to Christ and were lightened, when the burden rolled from off our back! Oh, that hour, that earliest of all our gracious remembrances, that first of all dates, when we began to live, when we stepped down into that bath of atoning blood and came out of it fairer than any queen, more glorious than the daughters of men, white as alabaster, pure as crystal, like the driven snow without spot or blemish! That day we never can forget, for it always rises to our recollection the moment we begin to speak about pardon--the day of our own pardon, of our own forgiveness. The galley-slave may forget the hour when he ceased to tug the oar. The poor chattel of his master may forget the time when he escaped from the accursed slave-holder's grasp, and became a freeman. The sick man may forget the day when, after being long worn with pain till he was emaciated and at the gates of death, the blood began to leap in his veins, and the glow of health began to invigorate his frame. The culprit who lay shivering beneath the heads-man's axe may forget the hour when suddenly his pardon was granted and his life was spared. But if all these should consign to oblivion their surprising joys, the pardoned soul can never, never, never forget. Unless reason should lose her seat, the quickened soul can never cease to remember the time when, Jesus said to it, "Live." Oh! and has Jesus pardoned all our sins and have we sinned still? Has he washed me, and have I defiled myself again? Did he shed his blood to cleanse me and have I returned again to

my natural depravity? Oh, these are abominations indeed! I have heard some say that the sins of believers are but trifles. Ah! my brethren, I do think if there be any difference, the sins of disciples of Christ are a thousand times worse than the sins of unbelievers, because they sin against a gospel of love, a covenant of mercy; against sweet experience and against precious promises. The sinner may kick against the pricks, that is bad enough; but to kick against the wounds of Christ, is worse still. Yet that is what you and I have done. We have sinned since the dear hour that cleansed our guilt away.

Nor did the gracious things we have mentioned exhaust the lovingkindness of the Lord. When he had washed us, according to the ninth verse, he anointed us with oil. Yes, and that has been repeated many and many a time. "Thou hast anointed my head with oil." He gave us the oil of his grace; our faces were like priests, and we went up to his tabernacle rejoicing. Have ye received the Spirit, my brethren? Oh, think how great an honour that God should dwell in man. The centurion said he was not worthy that Christ should come under the roof of his house, and yet the Holy Spirit has not merely come under your roof but has come into your heart; there he dwells and there he reigns. Yet, my dear brethren, yet you have sinned. With God's oil on your head you have sinned. With the Holy Ghost in your heart you have sinned. Ah! if any man carried God within him, would he go and sin? Shall the body that is the temple of the Holy Ghost be desecrated? Yet that has been the case with us. We have had God within us, and yet we have sinned. Marvel of marvels! He that would defile the house in which the king lived, would certainly be guilty of high insult; but he who defiles the temple in which the Holy Ghost resides--what shall be said of him? This is what we have done. O Lord, have mercy upon thy people! Now we see our abomination in this clear light, we beseech thee pardon it, for

Jesu's sake!

But further, we find that he not only washed us, he not only anointed us with oil; but he clothed us, and clothed us sumptuously. The rich man in the parable of Jesus was clothed in scarlet, but we are better robed than he, for we are clothed in broidered-work. "Jesus spent his life to work my robe of righteousness." His sufferings were so many stitches when he made the broidered-work of my righteousness. "I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin." Our shoes have been as iron and brass, and as our day, so has our strength been. We have had always grace hitherto sufficient for us. "And I girded thee about with fine linen,"--the righteousness of saints. He has given to us the virtues of the Holy Spirit, the robe of sanctification; and then he has covered us with silk, even with that all-glorious robe of righteousness "woven from the top throughout without seam," in which all his people stand arrayed. There never was any one dressed so well as God's people. Outwardly they may wear fustian and calico; they may come up to the house of God dressed in the garb of poverty, but they have robes which men cannot see, though such as angels can see and admire. A saint's wardrobe would be a matchless thing to look at if we could but see it with the eyes of our understanding illuminated. Have you ever been taken to see the wardrobes of some great personages,--their multiplied garments--the robes which they wore in state? You have wondered at their lavish expenditure; but see your own, see those shoes, that girding of fine linen, and that covering of silk. Why, all the wealth of mankind could not buy an ell of that stuff; they could not procure a hem, much less the entire robe with which the righteous are adorned and made glorious. And yet they have turned aside and sinned. What should you think of a bishop in his lawn sleeves defiling himself with outcasts in the

street? What would think you of a king with a crown on his head going to break the laws of his kingdom? What would you think if a monarch should invest us with all the insignia of nobility, and we should afterwards violate the high orders conferred upon us while adorned with the robes of state? This is just what you and I have done. We have had all these costly robes and glorious garments, and then we have gone and sinned against our God. O ingratitude of the vilest sort! Where are there words to denounce it? What language can fully express it?

We have but time to notice each one of these briefly; we have not only received clothing, but ornaments. "I have decked thee also with ornaments, and put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck, and I put a jewel on thy forehead and earrings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head." Just like a loving husband, not content with giving his wife an ornament, he gives her many. And the Lord, you see, gives to his Church all the ornaments she can possibly desire. There are ornaments for her ears, a crown for her head, bracelets for her hands, and a chain for her neck. We cannot be more glorious; Christ has given the Church so much, she could not have more. He could not bestow upon her that which is more beautiful, more precious, or more costly. She has all she can receive. The Lord Jesus has bestowed all his wealth, and all heaven's wealth upon his Church, and you and I are the inheritors and wearers of these precious ornaments. He has given to us jewels in our ears--a hearing ear; he has given us the jewel in our forehead--a holy courage for his name; he has given us a crown upon our head--a garland crown of lovingkindness and tender mercy; he has given us bracelets upon our hands, that whatsoever we touch may be graced, that our conduct may be beautiful and lovely, an ornament to the profession which we have espoused; and he has been pleased to put a chain about our necks, that we may ever be known to be right noble

personages--noble of rank, exalted of station. Nevertheless, in the face of all these, we have sinned against him.

Dear friends, it may seem like repetition when I go over the list of these mercies, but I cannot help it. I should like every one of these to be as a trumpet in your ear to wake you up to look at your sins, and as a dagger in the heart of your pride to stab it and make it die. By these mercies of God, I adjure you, do hate your sins; by these lovingkindnesses, these favours, immense, innumerable, unsearchable, by these covenant gifts, every one of them more precious, than a world of diamonds, I beseech you hate the sins that have grieved your gracious Lord; and made his Spirit mourn. To see my sins in the lurid light of Sinai were bad enough, but to see them in the mellow radiance of his countenance and in the light that is shed from the cross of my dying Master, this is to see sin in all its blackness and all its heinousness. Never, dear brethren, tamper with sin; never have anything to do with those who think sin is little because grace is great. Shun, I beseech you, any man who comforts his heart with the hope that the crimes of God's children are mere trifles. No; though there be precious blood to wash it all away, yet sin is an awful thing. Though there be covenant promises to keep the believer secure, yet sin is a damning thing. Though there be eternal love which will not execute the divine anger upon us, yet sin is a thrice--cursed thing. In fact, I would strain language to find an epithet for that sin which dares to nestle in the heart of a man whom God has loved and chosen. I know that there is a tendency among some ministers--I will not say to whom I allude; you may readily guess--who preach a gospel which does seem as if it tolerated iniquity. Oh, come not into their secret, I pray you. Better for you, though it were one of the worst things that could be, if you were to endorse Arminianism, rather than Antinomianism. Of the two

devils I think the white devil is the least devilish. As Rowland Hill said,--"The one is a white devil and the other a black one." They are both devils, I doubt not, but still one is more fearful in its character than the other. Have nothing to do with that horrible spirit which has done more to destroy sound doctrine in our churches than anything else. Arguments will never break Antinomianism down. We are not afraid to meet our antagonists in fair and open battle. The ill lives of some who call themselves Calvinists, and are no more Calvinists than they are Jews, have brought that doctrine into great disrepute, and we often have flung in our faces the wickedness of some professors, and the rash, not to say wicked teaching of some of our preachers, as a reason why our brethren should be accounted worthy of all scorn. The more gracious God is, the more holy you should be; the more love he manifests to you, the more love should you reflect to him.

III. And now, I shall close by noticing in the third place, WHAT OUR SINS REALLY HAVE BEEN. We will not enter into particulars, we have each one, a different way. It were idle therefore for me to think of describing the sins of such an assembly as the present. The germs, the vileness, the essence of our own sin, has lain in this--that we have given to sin and to idols things that belong unto God. "Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them, and tookest thy broidered garments and coveredst them, and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour." I have done this--let me make confession for myself, and then I admonish you each one apply the case to yourselves. It has been a happy Sabbath day, my soul has enjoyed personal fellowship with Christ: I have gone up in the pulpit

and had liberty of speech, and power has attended the words; there has been manifestly the Holy Spirit in the midst of his Church; I have, gone home, had access to God in prayer, and enjoyed again communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. I go forth once more to unfold the things of the gospel, and with delight to my own soul, have I heard afterwards of saints who have been refreshed, and sinners converted. This was like "fine flour, and honey and oil" that God had given to me. What did he give it me for? Why, that I might offer it to him, and give him all the glory. And do you know, I have caught myself saying, "Ah, you have done well to-day; you are growing in grace, and living near to God." What! am I offering God's blessings before the shrine of my abominable pride? Am I making an offering to Moloch, and bringing the very gifts and love-tokens of my Father, to be laid upon the altar of my own pride? This is abominable indeed! This is so vile that no language can execrate it sufficiently. To offer my own work is bad enough, but to offer God's grace to idols, to spend his mercies in the gratification of my flesh--to look upon my own self as having done it, to sacrifice to my own conceit, to make an oblution to self of that which God has given me--this is atrocious enough to make a man fall very humbly before God, to feel the bitterness of his sin, and ask for pardon.

You have transgressed in like manner, I dare say. When you pray at a prayer meeting, the devil insinuates the thought, and you entertain it, "What a fine fellow I am!" You may detect yourself when you are talking to a friend of some good things God has done, or when you go home and tell your wife lovingly the tale of your labour, there is a little demon of pride at the bottom of your heart. You like to take credit to yourself for the good things you have done. I am speaking of you all; there is no exception here. Does not a little bit of the old man creep

out, just as when Jehu said, "Come see my zeal for the Lord." Now what is that but taking God's fine meal, and oil, and honey, and offering them to yourselves? It there should be an innocent man, one who pleads "not guilty" upon this matter he can get up and go out if he likes; but I am sure you will all sit still, at least, all who know your own hearts. Your own experience will compel you to say--" I must confess it before God." But have you not noticed that there are other ways besides this? Sometimes a man has another god besides pride. That god may be his sloth. He does not want to do much; he reads in the Bible that there is a finished righteousness, that the covenant of grace is complete. Have you never detected yourself, when inclined to be dilatory in spiritual things, leaning on the oar of the covenant, instead of pulling at it, and saying, "Well, these things are true, but there is no great need for me to stir myself." Ah! you have been quietly nestling down to sleep, even under the influence of the sweet wine of the covenant of grace. It is sad that it should be so. It would be bad enough if we had picked up an excuse from our own logic; but instead of that, we have gone to God's book to feign apologies for our idleness. Was not that taking his mercies and sacrificing them to false deities? Sometimes it is even worse. God gives to his people riches, and they offer them before the shrine of their covetousness. He gives them talent, and they prostitute it to the service of their ambition. He gives them judgment, and they pander to their own advancement, and seek not the interest of his kingdom. He gives them influence; that influence they use for their own aggrandisement, and not for his honour. What is this but parallel to taking his gold, and his jewels, and hanging them upon the neck of Ashtaroth. Ah! let us take care when we think of our sins, that we set them in this light. It is taking God's mercies to lavish them upon his enemies. Now, if you were to make

me a present of some token of your regard, I think it would be the meanest and most ungracious thing in the world I could do to take it over to your enemy, and say, "There, I come to pay my respects." To pay my respects to your foe with that which had been the token of your favour! There are two kings at enmity with one another--two powers that have been at battle, and one of them has a rebellious subject, who is caught in the very act of treason, and condemned to die. The king very graciously pardons him, and then munificently endows him. "There," says he, "I give you a thousand crown-pieces;" and that man takes the bounty, and devotes it to increasing the resources of the king's enemies. Now, that were a treason and baseness too vile to be committed by worldly men. Alas then! that is what you have done. You have bestowed on God's enemies what God gave to you as a love token. Oh, men and brethren, let us bow ourselves in dust and ashes before God; let us turn pride out to-night if we can; but it will be hard work. Let us try, in the strength of the Spirit, that we may at least put our foot on its neck, and as we come to the Lord's table, may we have a joy for pardoned guilt, but may we mourn that we have pierced the Lord, and mourn most that we continue to pierce him still, and sometimes put him to an open shame by our disregard for his laws.

The Lord bless this to his people; and as for those who are unconverted, let them recollect that if the righteous have cause to weep, and if the sins of the saint be abominable, what must be the iniquity of that man who goeth on still in his sins and repenteth not! The Lord grant to such, grace to repent, and pardon, for Jesus' sake.

Effects Of Sound Doctrine

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 22, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:24.

I AM not about to enter upon any argument in proof of the Doctrine of Election tonight. That I have done at other times and am prepared to do so yet again. I purpose rather to speak of some of the practical effects which result from this article of the Believer's faith. We cannot, however, pass over the text without observing that it is very certain there is an elect and that these elect are a special people; for they are here defined as being "the very elect"--those who are such in deed and in truth. It is equally clear that these elect ones cannot be deceived. The text informs us that if it were possible, those deceivers who had gone to the full stretch of great signs and wonders, doubtless adding thereto all kinds of eloquence and persuasion, were not able to deceive the elect; the simple reason being that it is not possible. They would have deceived them if there had been a possibility, but the elect were a people who could not possibly be turned from the steadfastness of their faith and be deceived. Moreover, we may add that in the 22nd verse, these same elect people are spoken of as being those for whose sake the rigor of God's punishments is abated. "Then shall be a great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for

the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." God did not temper the rigor of His dispensations for the sake of all flesh, but for the elect'ssake. The piteous wail of manhood moves not the Almighty to spare His righteous dispensation of punishment upon the nations; it is the cry of the elect that moves His heart! For their sake He promises to shorten those days and sheath, as it were, His sword before its time.

We simply make these remarks to show that in the dealings of God's Providence, and surely also in the dealings of His Grace, God has a special regard for His chosen and justified ones. For the elect's sake, He does many things which otherwise would not enter into the plan of His government. If our Bibles were read by us in the original, we should be exceedingly struck with the prominence which is given to the Doctrine of Election; and if, my Brothers and Sisters, you were at all acquainted with the manners of the early Christian Church, or had read any of the letters which have been preserved of the first age of Christianity, you would be astonished to find how conspicuously this great Doctrine appears; so much so that Christians were accustomed to address each other as, "ElectOnes." The term, far from being recondite, was common in daily conversation. And the Doctrine, far from being kept back--I do not hesitate to say, that great Doctrine of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of our most blessed Lord--even that Doctrine had not such prominence in the early Christian Church as the Doctrine of the Election of Grace. The word, "elect," recurred so frequently in conversation and was so mixed up with all their preaching, with all their assembling together, and with all their Church acts--that it is impossible to conceive that its meaning could be obscured, or held in disesteem. Upon that matter, however, as I said before, it is not my present intention to enlarge; my simple endeavor will be to clear the

Doctrine of sundry aspersions which have been cast upon it, by showing its proper practical influence--an influence which I hope as a Church we do not merely show in words by the lips of our minister, but in our daily life and conversation as a people!

It has often been objected to those who hold the Doctrine of Election, that it restricts ministers from earnestly preaching to sinners. Now, we are compelled to confess with the greatest sorrow, and I may add also with no little indignation, that there have been some men who have never been able to grasp the Gospel in its integrity in order to present the Grace of God to men's minds at once in its Sovereignty and in its freeness. Though their sermons sometimes ring with the clear melodious note of the Grace of God, they are too often bent on qualifying the extent of its welcome, and inventing explanations of their own, to wrest the simple meaning of Scriptures. Calvinists, such men may call

themselves, but, unlike the Reformer, whose name they adopt, they bring a system of divinity to the Bible to interpret it, instead of making every system, be its merits what they may, yield and give place to the pure and unadulterated Word of God! They will not imitate their Master in inviting all men to Christ--they dare not preach a full Christ to empty sinners--they are ashamed to say, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the water." They have been obliged to cover up such a passage as this, because they could not understand it--"Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but you would not." They will not preach upon such a text as this--"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." They are ashamed to say to men, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" They dare not come out and preach as Peter did--"Repent

you, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." This, they say, would be to deny the Doctrine of Election at once! But, Beloved, we have not so learned Christ. I trust we have learned to prove practically, by our ministry, that it is possible to have all the heart of compassion which a man can feel for dying souls, and yet grasp with a firm hand the standard of the Doctrine of Grace. It has been our aim and objective--at least I can speak for myself--it has been myaim and objective in my ministry, to show that while I believe the Lord knows them who are His, it is, at the same time, written over the fountain of living waters, "Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

Sometimes it has been said that the Doctrine of Election leads naturally to carelessness, and to hard-heartedness in sin--that it acts as a bugbear to frighten penitents, and as a drug which sinks the impenitent into deeper sleep. Here again, I must confess, for it is but the duty of candor to acknowledge it, that the preaching of some men has had this tendency. This Doctrine has been used too frequently for the destruction of men's souls! But what argument is this against the Truth of God? What Truth of God has not been Perverted? Are there not, on the other hand, those who teach God's universal mercy, and has not that damned men's souls? You may teach and teach rightly, too, that God is long-suffering and that at the eleventh hour He still invites a sinner to Himself. But has not that very fact of God's long-suffering helped to lull sinners to sleep and weaken the power of that tremendous Word of God, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts"? There is no passage of Scripture which may not be the means of a man's destruction, if he wills to make it so! From the very pinnacle of the Temple you may cast yourselves down, saying at the moment you commit suicide, "He has given His angels charge over me, to keep me in

all my ways." If you will be foolish enough to destroy yourselves at the foot of the Cross, you may do it. There are many ways to Hell, and when a man would commit self-murder on his soul, he need be at no loss to distil from the most wholesome Truths in Scriptures, poison to his spirit. I say, therefore, it proves nothing whatever against the Doctrine, that men have so perverted it!

This Doctrine has likewise often been charged with a tendency to cut off the sympathies of Christians from their fellows. "Surely," says one, "if you believe yourself to be an "Elect One," and if /cannot receive the Doctrine, but, nevertheless, put my humble trust in Christ, there is a tendency in the Doctrine to make you separate yourself from all the rest of men." And I must confess too many hold the Doctrines of Grace in bitterness. An old Puritan at St. Paul's Cross, complained of a set of ministers that were like bitterns--using the old English word--they were like a bittern, as he called it. They had no song, they could make but hoots. They had not a sweet note to sing. Alas, there are such! Their style always seems to be--"If you hold what I preach, you shall go to Heaven; if you do not, I warn you very solemnly as the part of a faithful man, it is all up with you." It does not matter though there is but a shade of difference, though the unlearned cannot tell where there is any point of divergence, yet, according to these good Brothers, we are forever to be destroyed because we cannot sit down at their feet and exclusively receive all the dogmas they teach! But, my dear Friends, if any of you are laboring under the idea that the Doctrine of Election fosters such a spirit, allow me to dissuade you. On the contrary, it has been the desire of the true Calvinist--not of the hyper-Calvinists, I cannot defend them--to feel that if he has received more of the Light of God than another man, it is due to God's Grace, and not to his merits. Therefore charity is inculcated, while

boasting is excluded. We give our hand to every man who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may! The Doctrine of Election, like the great act of Election, itself, is intended to divide not between Israel and Israel, but between Israel and the Egyptians--not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of this world!

A man may be evidently of God's chosen family and yet, though elected, may not believe in the Doctrine of Election! I hold that there are many savingly called who do not believe in effectual calling and that there are a great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe the Doctrine of Final Perseverance. We do hope that the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We set not their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the Truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think we are mistaken, too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy. And when we meet around the Cross, we hope that we shall always feel that we are one in Christ Jesus, even though as yet the ministering Spirit has not led all of us into all the lengths and breadths of the Truth.

Having thus cleared the way by cutting down a few of the trees that have been standing in my track, I proceed to notice the real effect of the Doctrine of Election upon the true Christian. I shall divide my subject thus--the influence it has upon our opinions, our emotions, our experiences, our devotions, and our actions. I conceive that these five embrace the whole of the Christian life.

I. THE BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION HAS A HIGHLY SALUTARY EFFECT UPON OUR OPINIONS.

Any observer who has looked through the history of the Church, will not fail to have discovered that there has been a salting influence

exercised by the Doctrine of Grace upon the minds of those who have been rooted and grounded in its strong and fruitful soil. At the present time, Lutheranism on the continent is scarcely better than infidelity. I have been informed by those who are capable of judging, that too many of the followers of Luther have become degenerate, have cast aside spirituality and have really returned to the beggarly elements of Romanism, even though they persist in their Protestant profession. But, my Brothers and Sisters, the like cannot be said of the followers of Calvin. The Dutch Reformed Church, albeit that there may be much in it over which we might mourn, has never departed from the Truth as it is in Jesus. Enter the place of worship where the Reformed occupy the pulpit, and you need not be at any loss to discover the way to Heaven. There may be too much dryness in their prayers, and too much dullness in their mode of preaching, but the Truth of God, the vital Truth, is there and God still acknowledges it in the salvation of sinners. They may not bear so high a fame or exert so wide an influence as their noble ancestors, but they have not turned aside to heresy, or perverted the Truths of the Gospel of Christ! And with all the defections of the present age, albeit that Sectarians of all classes have seceded to the Church of Rome, I can scarcely remember a solitary instance where any man who has once embraced that "form of sound words" called the Doctrines of Grace, has ever forsaken them--at least to turn aside to the desperate heresy of that false Roman church! The truth is that the Doctrine of Election, with the sister Truths linked with it, acts as a great anchor. It holds fast the soul, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit, a man is brought to feel that he has something stable to rely upon, which he cannot and will not leave to be tossed about upon a sea, without chart or compass, at the mercy of every wind of doctrine.

There is something in the Doctrine which, as it were, digs up the earth and lets the soul strike its roots down deep-- that girds us about as with a triple belt of steel and leaves no place in which arrow of infidelity or false doctrine can find a place to wound us! As a Church and as a people banded together in the fear of the Lord, I hope we shall prove to the world in our experience, that though other churches may step aside gradually from their simplicity and steadfastness, we, forswearing everything which is not consistent with the naked simplicity and beauteousness of the unclothed Truth of God, will hold fast to the form of Truth which we have received and which has been taught us by the Spirit of God in His most Holy Book. Nor is this all. Election, I take it--and I am here speaking of the whole set of Truths which group around this as their central sun--has not only a salting power, but exercises a flavoring and seasoning power over all our other Doctrines! The purest evangelism springs from this Truth of God. I will not say that the Arminian teaches that salvation is by works; this is so continually denied by the Arminian, that I will not charge a falsehood upon him, at which he professes to shudder. But at the same time, I do say that the tendency of Arminianism is towards legality--it is nothing but legality which lays at the root of Arminianism! Any one doctrine of the Arminian which differs from the Orthodox--let it be carefully dissected--will prove that after all, his ground of difference is legality. I received but the other day, a letter from an earnest Arminian anxious to correct my opinions. He said, "If God has chosen some men from before the foundation of the world, is it not more consistent with His Justice to conceive that He chose those who through life have used their best endeavors to serve Him, rather than that He should choose the drunk, or the harlot, to give them salvation?" Of course it is more consistent! Moses proves it--if salvation is by the

Law or by works; but with the Gospel it is totally inconsistent, for Christ declares, "The publicans and the harlots enter into the Kingdom of Heaven before you"--that is, before you Pharisees--before the very men who in their own blind way had strived to win salvation by works!

My dear Friends, after all, the kicking against the Doctrine of Election is a kicking against the Gospel. This Doctrine is a first principle in the Divine plan of mercy, and when rightly known, it prepares our minds to receive all the other Doctrines. Or, on the contrary, misunderstand this, and you are pretty sure to make mistakes about all the rest! Take for instance, Final Perseverance. Some men say, "If we continue in faith, and if we continue in holiness, we shall certainly be saved at last." Do you not see at once that this is legality--that this is hanging our salvation upon our work--that this is making our eternal life to depend on something we dot No, the Doctrine of Justification, itself, as preached by an Arminian, is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works after all. For he always thinks faith is a work of the creature and a condition of his acceptance. It is as false to say that man is saved by faith as a work, as that he is saved by the deeds of the Law! We are saved by faith as the gift of God and as the first token of His eternal favor to us; but it is not faith as our work that saves, otherwise we are saved by works, and not by Grace at all. If you need any argument upon this point, I refer you to our great Apostle Paul, who so constantly combats the idea that works and Grace can ever be united together. He argues, "If it is of Grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise Grace were no more Grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more of Grace, otherwise work is no more work."

You will, I think, perceive, if you look through the roll of mighty

preachers, that all those who have been great in the simple preaching of the Doctrine of Salvation by Faith, have been men who held the Doctrine of Election. You cannot find, that I am aware of, but one or two old Puritan works written by any but those who held this Truth of God. You cannot discover a great divine--look back through centuries--who has not held it. There have been some small ones in modern times, and some earnest ones, too, but the ages past have been all utterly destitute of anything like a great preacher who has not held this Doctrine! I might make exception of Wesley and Fletcher, of Madely, among modern divines--but in the olden times there was nothing like any great and successful preacher, who has not held the Doctrine of Election. This Doctrine has always had an evangelizing power on the souls of men, so that those who have held it, have preached more clearly than any others, the simple Truth of God that we are saved by Grace and not by works. And I would add, that I have also observed that the Doctrine of Election exercises another influence upon men's opinions--it renders them more clear and lucid.

Out of hundreds of young persons who continually come to join our Church, from all bodies of Christians, I have always discovered that those who have the best idea of Scripture--not simply looking at it from my own point of view, but allowing other people to be judges--are those who have held this Doctrine. Without it there is a lack of thought and, generally speaking, they have no idea whatever of a system of divinity. It is almost impossible to make a man a theologian unless you begin with this. You may, if you please, put a young Believer to college for years, but unless you show him this ground plan of the Everlasting Covenant, he will make little progress, because his studies do not cohere-- he does not see how one Truth of God fits with another--and how all the Truths of God must harmonize together! Once

let him get a clear idea that salvation is by Grace--let him discover the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace--let him clearly understand the meaning of Election, as showing the purpose of God, and its bearing upon other Doctrines which show the accomplishment of that purpose--and from that moment he is on the high road to become an instructive Believer. He will always be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and with fear. The proof is palpable. Take any community throughout England--you will find poor men hedging and ditching that have a better knowledge of divinity than one half of those who come from our academies and colleges! The reason is simply and entirely that these men have first learned in their youth, the system of which Election is a center, and have afterwards found their own experience exactly square with it. They have built upon that good foundation, a temple of holy knowledge, which has made them fathers in the Church of God.

Every other scheme is as nothing to build with--they are but wood, hay and stubble! Pile what you will upon them, and they will fall. They have no system of architecture; they belong to no order of reason or revelation. A disjointed system makes its topstone bigger than its foundation; it makes one part of the Covenant to disagree with another; it makes Christ's mystical body to be of no shape whatever; it gives Christ a bride whom He does not know and does not choose, and it puts Him up in the world to be married to anyone who will have Him--but He is to have no choice Himself! It spoils every figure that is used with reference to Christ and His Church. The good old plan of the Doctrine of

Grace is a system which once received, is seldom given up; when rightly learned, it molds the thoughts of the heart, and it gives a sacred stamp to the characters of those who have once discovered its power.

II. In the second place, I come to notice THE INFLUENCES OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION UPON OUR EMOTIONS.

Here we speak not of matter of opinion, but of effect. The man who sighs for some Divine witness that He is chosen of God is, I should think, necessarily humble. But the man who knows by gracious evidences that this seal is set upon him, is one from whose eyes every selfish pretension is forever hid. If he could suppose that God had chosen him by the foresight and foreknowledge of some good qualities he possessed, he might be puffed up with unbearable conceit! But he knows God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the things that are not, things too worthless for notice in this world. He must take his place, therefore, down there among the offscouring of earth, before he can be lifted up by Divine Grace to sit among the adopted heirs of Glory! There are some who profess to believe the Doctrine of Election who are as proud as Lucifer, but it is not the Doctrine of Election which makes them so; it is their own evil hearts that can turn everything good into evil. Such men, I think, are rather fatalists in judgment, than believers in God the Father's love at heart. The Doctrine itself, if it were rightly construed, would tend to humble such and keep them humble. Can you conceive a more contrite spirit than that expressed in these lines--

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter where there's room?
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in,
Else I'd still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

I ask whether such a hymn, which has in it the very gist of the Doctrine, is not the meek utterance of a chastened soul? Can the haughty unsubdued heart entertain a sentiment like this?--"What was there in me to merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight? It is even so, Father, we even must say, For so it seemed good in Your sight." The language of this hymn ought to be in harmony with our daily life. If we are elect and precious, we must bow humbly before the Throne and give God the glory of our salvation!

Take the Doctrine again, with regard to another emotion of the soul, not amply of prostration--but the emotion of gratitude. There is a common bounty of God that appeals to common gratitude. Too often, alas, we pass by these ordinary mercies and slight the goodness that bestows them. "He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust." You may go abroad into the fields and see the liberal Providence of the Creator; and when you do so, it behooves you to lift up your hearts and adore. But tell me, is there not a sweeter sense of gratitude to the soul that experiences His particular favor? Has He brought you into the banqueting house? Has the banner of His love waved over your head? Does He place His left hand under your head and His right hand embrace you? What gratitude will such choice attentions to His chosen ones stir up! This surely will put some stanzas into your Psalm of praise that never echoed through the gladsome mountains and fruitful valleys--a music too soft for the outer world and suited only to the inner chamber of affection. Boaz spoke with a goodly salutation to the reapers. He was bountiful to the maidens who were gathering the sheaves. But greater kindness he showed to Ruth. The gratitude she felt was more than theirs--"She fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, why have I found Grace in yours eyes, that you should take knowledge of me, seeing

I am a stranger?" This electing favor, this choice comfort, this friendly speech, these words to the heart--these are the things that awaken devout gratitude in the Believer--distinguishing and discriminating love wakes the echo of soul-stirring gratitude!

Then, again, it is sometimes said that this is a very gloomy Doctrine. John Calvin is often described by those who hate the Doctrines which he clarified and preached--for he is not the author of them any more than I am--he is described as being such a terrible ascetic, of a forbidding countenance, of preaching the destruction of infants and reveling in other hideous sentiments--which in his soul he loathed--and none of his writings ever inculcate. These are the inventions of lies. John Calvin certainly was a sickly man, and looked ill, and well he might. If an Arminian had to go through half the difficulties and trials, he would have been in his grave 10 years before; he would have had no stamina in his soul to bear up against the bodily disease which poor John Calvin had to endure. Yet he was seen every morning going up to the divinity college and delivering his lectures in the halls before his students.

And we have the result of his labors in about 56 large volumes of most extraordinary divinity, which those who rage against him had better read before they open their mouths again! That man was preserved in the midst of troubles, perils and woes, still a joyous man in his heart, with gleams of sunshine in his soul--the flash of which I have continually seen in his Commentary and discovered in his Institutes!

The tendency of the Doctrine of Election is not gloomy--it is joyous! I know there have been times with me when my spirit has been so low that nothing could elevate it but this precious Truth of God! I have even taken down old Elisha Coles' book on God's Sovereignty and read a chapter out of that as a tonic, and I have felt all the happier and better. Next to the Bible, such books tend to cheer one's soul more

than any books I know.

In my bright and happy days, let me have other things, trifles, if you will, but I must come to sound things when I lie on my couch, and especially when I come near to the grave's mouth, and I am ready to look into eternity. I know not what you will discover to comfort you--there is nothing but the Doctrine of Grace that satisfies me--nothing but that will give me any comfort! This Doctrine has filled our souls, sometimes, with joy that we scarcely knew how to contain; we have mounted as on the wings of eagles up to our God, who has made us to rejoice in Him by reason of His distinguishing favor. What was it that made David dance before the Ark? The Doctrine of Election, for what did he say to the woman who mocked him for his dancing? He said, "God has chosen me before your father!" That Truth moved him to mirth! And many an heir of Heaven has danced before God's Ark when the Spirit has revealed to him that his name is enrolled among the chosen ones of Jehovah!

III. Having shown the effect of this Doctrine upon our emotions, in humbling us and in stirring us up, and carrying us away in holy joy and rapture, let us now ask WHAT EFFECT IT HAS ON OUR EXPERIENCE? This is its effect upon the Christian's experience--it causes him to rejoice in the midst of deep despondence; and again, it sobers him in the midst of worldly joy. It seems to say to him--"Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." On this I will not dwell, but perhaps it is only fair to add this thought--the Doctrine of Election has had in its raw misstated form, a very painful influence upon the experience of many a young Believer. There are many who have Grace enough to convict them of sin, but not light enough to see the Savior, who for a long time are kept in darkness and the Valley of the Shadow of Death through fear that they

could not come to Christ rightly without they first knewtheir election.
I had this matter brought before me this afternoon by one out of a numerous body of converts with whom I had the pleasure of conversing. Some good woman said to me, "I had a period of something like hope after I was brought to seek the Lord. Then suddenly the Doctrine of Election crossed my path and I was, for a long time, in great distress about it." I was not surprised at her anxiety, but I was gratified to find that she had obtained the true solution of her knotty point. It was not by shutting her eyes to the Truth of God as recorded in the Bible, but by having it commended to her conscience with the power of the Spirit that she found peace. And now the Doctrine which once appeared to her dark bodings as an iron fence or a bronze wall to exclude sinnersfrom coming to CHRIST is made clear to her faith as an open door to admit saints into the FATHER'S Presence. Do you understand this, my Brothers and Sisters? If I speak of Doctrinein the Divine order, the purpose of God the Father went before the work of God the Son. That is to say, we were inscribed as saints in the Book of Life before we were accounted sinners and before the sentence of death passed upon us in Adam! When, however, I come to speak of experience, the order is reversed. We are brought to knowledge of our sinfulness in the flesh before we learn our acceptance in the Beloved.
If without seeming to forget the eternal Unity of the Three Persons in the Godhead I might venture to illustrate my meaning, I would put it to you in this way. God the Father first loved us, and gave us to Christ--that is the Doctrine of the Everlasting Covenant. But in showing you the Doctrine of Redemption, Jesus Christ first finds us as lost sheep, and then having sanctified us by His one offering, He presents us to the Father. Again, the Decree of Election is more ancient than the factof our calling, as it stands in the councils of

eternity. Not so in the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Here our calling is opened first, and the knowledge of our election follows after. And why? I answer for this reason--because in the callof Grace we are always viewed as sinners and invited and wooed as sinners--while in the election of Grace we are always viewed as saints, as sanctified persons in the highest sense of the word. Well, then, it is as lost sinners we are invited to Christ; but it is as elect and precious ones we are presented to the Father without blame in love. Election shouts as loudly as any other Doctrine--"Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And if election is called to account for this, it replies--"Those who will come, God wills shall come, and those who hunger to come, God has made them hungry and there is the proof of their election." Those who seek must find Him, for election itself decrees that he who seeks shall'find and to him who knocks it shallbe opened.

IV. And now I must be very brief, indeed, upon the next point, which is THE EFFECT WHICH ELECTION HAS UPON OUR DEVOTIONS. Strange to say, this effect is discovered in a Christian whatever his religious creed may be. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you who have had yours eyes blinded for a long time with wrong-doing, come and let us hear you pray--"Our Father, who are in Heaven, we bless You for Your Grace which sought us when we were estranged from You--for Your love which was forced upon us when we loved You not. We praise You, Lord, that You did call us and did bring us into the fold." There the man, you see, is acknowledging the Free Grace of God in his prayers! He goes on, "O Lord, when we look on those round about us who are still dead in sin, we weep over them and we are compelled to say, 'O Lord, it is of Your Grace that we are what we are; You have made us to differ. Lord, take those others as brands from the burning and stretch out Your hand

to save them." Why, my dear men, you are not leaving it to their free will at all! You are not leaving it to them, but asking God to choose them! You are talking Calvinism of the highest order! A man may preach Arminianism, but prayit, he cannot; it would be blasphemy in prayer if he did! And so the Doctrine of Grace is the very inspiration of song! Kent's hymns are, I think, about as destitute of any poetry as any hymns I ever read, yet they roll with the full tide of melody. They give a simple statement of good sound high Doctrine and that is poetry. It is essential poetry, for poetry is, after all, the grandest form of truth. There will always be an effect produced in the loving child of God in his worship, by his belief. His instinctive thoughts, perhaps, deny belief in the Doctrine of Election--a belief which must exist in the faith of every child of God, however strenuously he may deny it a place in his creed.

Then again, does this Doctrine mar the Christian's watchfulness? Surely not. Believing himself to be chosen of God, he is always watching unto prayer that he may not stain his garments, and bring dishonor upon the God who has honored him. Or will this prevent him from searching the Scriptures, do you fancy, when he knows that in every line of Scripture he has a special interest? The devotion of those men who have held this great Truth of God is beyond comparison! The ardor of the most enthusiastic Believer in good works has never rivaled the holy ardor of the man who has nothing to move him in his prayer, instrumentally beyond the grateful recognition of his election by God in Christ Jesus.

V. Then to conclude--WHAT EFFECT DOES ELECTION HAVE ON OUR ACTIONS? If this Doctrine is fully received and known, it breathes with all gratitude to God, an earnest desire to show forth His praise; it leads to all kinds of holy activity, and a hearty endeavor for the service of God. We are told continually by philosophic writers, that the idea of

necessity--the idea that anything is fixed or decreed--tends at once to dampen activity. Never was there a grosser misrepresentation! Look abroad--everything that has been great in the spirit of the age has had a Necessitarian at the bottom of it. When Mohammed preached predestination, he took a Necessitarian view. Did that doctrine of predestination make his followers idle? Did it not make them dash into the battle, declaring they must die when the appointed time came, and while they lived they must fight and earnestly defend their faith? Or to take an instance from the history of our own country, did the Calvinism of Oliver Cromwell make his Ironsides idle? Did they not keep their powder dry? They believed that they were chosen men of God, and were they not men of valor? Did this Doctrine mar their energy? So in every good enterprise our Churches are never behind. Are we backward in Missionary enterprise? Are we slow to send forth men of God to preach in foreign lands? Are we deficient in our efforts? Are we the people who would preach to a select few?--who would erect buildings for worship that the poor scarcely dare to enter? Are we the people who would keep our religious services for a privileged circle? The fact is the most zealous, the most earnest, and the most successful of men have been those who have held this Truth of God! And, therefore, it cannot be true that this tends to dampen our energies or thwart our zeal. The best proof of this is especially in our lives. In the midst of God's holy congregation, let us pledge ourselves tonight--that holding this Truth of God--it makes us neither unholy nor inactive. It is our anxious endeavor to be seen as men chosen to bear the vessels of the Lord. It is our hearty prayer that in season and out of season we may labor for the winning of men's souls--knowing that to God's Churches is committed the work of gathering in those sheep who are of His fold, but who must be brought in, that there may be one flock and one Shepherd.

I have gone a great way into controversy tonight. It is not often I do so. But every builder in these times must have his sword upon his thigh and I have shown you the Word tonight. May God lead every one of us to this glorious Book, to lay hold upon the Truths of God taught us. And when we have seen a Truth of God, let us not be backward to declare it! You can be sure that those who honor Christ in His Word shall be honored by Christ in His Glory. Oh that you here present, who have as yet never sought Christ, and know nothing of Him, instead of being frightened by this Doctrine, would now come to Christ and say, "Lord, take me as I am and save me, for You can do it and unto You shall be all the glory"! It would be well if some of you could say what a convert now present said when driven almost to despair. He said in his prayer, "Jesus, if You will not have me, I will have You;" so he laid hold upon Jesus. Presently he had a clear view of Christ and His Grace, and could personally discern that if he would have Christ, then certainly Christ had already got him! Such a desire and resolution as that would never otherwise have sprung up in his soul. May God add a blessing on these remarks, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

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

Chapter 38

Constraining Love

DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JUNE 3, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

"Oh love the Lord, all you His saints." Psalm 31:23.

LOVE Jehovah--so the text runs. God the Father demands your love, and He deserves the warmest affection of your hearts. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. He has given His Son that He might redeem you with His precious blood. He has taken you into His family by Divine Adoption. He has "begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It is to Him that you address your prayers; it is He who grants you your requests. It is He who glorified His Son Jesus, receiving Him into the heavens as your Representative; and He will glorify Him yet again by gathering you together with all His people into the mansions provided for the blessed. "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints." Love the Son! It is He whose delights were with the sons of men of old, He who entered into suretyship and Covenant engagement on the behalf of His elect. It is He who with His precious blood has ransomed our souls and delivered them "from going down into the pit." He is our Mediator through whom we pray and our Intercessor who prays for us! He is our Head, our Husband, our King. He it is, even Jesus, who took our nature and wears a body like our own. It is He who imparts to us His mind now, and promises that hereafter we shall bear His likeness in Glory. "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints." Love the Holy Spirit! He has been revealed to us, and is known by us as "the Comforter." How endearing!--

"He in our hearts of sin and woe Has bid streams of Grace arise, Which unto endless glory flow."

He has quickened us when we were dead in sins. He has given us the Grace of repentance and of faith. He has sanctified us, and kept and preserved us up till now. He has taken of the things of Christ and has showed them unto us. He has dwelt in our poor hearts; He has been our Comforter, our Instructor and our daily Teacher; it is He who convicted us of sin when as yet we perceived not its malignity; and it is He who inspires our hearts and souls with the supernatural will and disposition of living to God.

It is of the Holy Spirit we are born-again and made partakers of the New Creation. It is by the same Spirit we are ultimately to be changed into the image of our Lord from glory to glory. "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints." If a blind world sees no beauty in its God and, therefore, does not love Him, yet oh you saints, love your God! If the enemies of the Most High set up other gods, and bow down before them--if they turn aside into crooked ways and go a whoring after their false gods--yet, oh you saints of His, stand fast and turn to your Jehovah and love Him forever more! Do not merely serve Him, but love Him. O house of Israel be not His slaves--serve not your God as the heathen serve their gods--out of terror and fear, but, "love the Lord all you saints." Be not as the subjects of Pharaoh, flogged to their work with the whip, but be you the dutiful children of your loving Father! Serve Him, I say, and rejoice before Him. Let love sweeten all your services; give Him all your hearts; make Him the object supreme of all your heart's desire. Always live to Him as you live by Him!

I shall have to ask your patience this evening, while I take a liberty with my text. It is this. I mean to confine its exhortation to one Person of the Divine Trinity. I have already accepted it in its comprehensiveness, "Oh love Jehovah, all you His saints." Tonight I propose to use it as consonant with such an occasion as the present,

when we shall celebrate the Supper of our Lord--"Oh love the Lord Jesus, all you His saints." And I shall endeavor, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me, first of all to stir you up to love Jesus, by showing how meet and befitting it is that you should do so. And then I shall seek to show the excellence of loving Jesus--how profitable it will be to your spirit, if your heart is wholly inflamed with love to Him.

I. First, then, my Beloved, let one sentiment animate every mind, and one emotion fill every heart. "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints." I feel in beginning to exhort you to love Christ, that love is a stream which must flow spontaneously, a fountain that must bubble up of its own accord. When Grace makes a man love Christ, it does not do it by force, for love is a wine that cannot be trod out of the grapes with pressure; it must freely distil. The heart cannot be forced to love. It is true it can be constrained bylove, but by no other constraint. Moses, with all the thunders that gave extraordinary sanction to his mission, never could make a heart love God! There is nothing but love that can create love, and love, itself, comes like droppings from the honeycomb. The only pressure it will deign to endure is the pressure of love. "Draw me," says love, "I will run after you--drive me and I cannot but resist--my desire cannot even stir, much less can I run after you with fervent attachment. My heart melted while my Beloved spoke, because He was my Beloved. Because He loved me, and spoke right lovingly, my heart melted. Had He been angry with me, had He spoken with coarse words, my soul might have melted with fear, but it never could have been dissolved with love." Love, I say, is the only pressure which may be used to produce love and yet, I think I may "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." It may so happen that while I strike some fear sparks, they may touch the inflammable passion of your new-born spirits; the breath of the Spirit may fan them and nurture

them, till the love of your heart will seem as if it had received new fire.

Oh Love! Let me bring forth some of your delicious sweets! Let me reason with the most tender logic of the heart, "Love the Lord Jesus all you His saints," because His Father loves Him. It must always be right for us to love whom God loves. Now the Father has much love, but His pre-eminent love is for His only-begotten Son. One with the Father from before all worlds, One in Essence, as well as in dwelling place and attribute, our Jesus was ever so dear to His Father's heart, that no tongue can tell, nor ever heart conceive, how deep the wellspring from where love flowed from the Father to the Son! "The Father has loved the Son and given all things into His hands." He has loved Him, not only because of the unity of their Nature, and because of their being one God, but the Father's love has flowed out to Christ as the Mediator. He has loved Him for His obedience which He perfected, for the sufferings which He endured, for the ransom which He paid, for the battle which He fought, for the victory which He won. There was one eye that always followed Christ more closely than any other; there was one heart that always understood His pains, and one face that was always filled with celestial delight, when Jesus Christ overcame His enemies. "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." When He had delivered Him up, I think His heart yearned for Him, His heart followed Him and His soul loved Him, as He saw Him rising superior to every enemy He stooped to meet, victorious in every conflict He deigned to wage, bearing every cross He condescended to undergo, and casting every load away from Him when He had borne it the predestined time. The Father, I say, has loved the Son because of the great things He has done and, therefore, has He delivered all things into His hands.

And, oh heavenly Father! Do You love the Lord Jesus, and shall my heart

refuse to love Him? Am I Your child, and shall not the Object of my Father's love be the darling of my heart? What You delight in shall be my delight; where You see beauty, my eyes shall gaze with rapture; and where Your heart finds solace, there shall my heart find unceasing repose and ineffable joy! Does Christ lie in Your bosom? He shall lie in mine! Is His name engraved on Your heart? Oh let it be engraved on mine also! Do you love Him? Do You love Him so that You could not love Him more? Be it my privilege to love Him thus with all the force and vehemence of my ransomed renovated nature, giving up all my spirit to be devoured by that consecrated fire of love to the Lord Jesus Christ! Again--may I not stir you up my Brothers and Sisters, to love Jesus Christ, by reminding you how the angels love Him? They have always loved Him since they have known Him. It is true they are but the creatures of yesterday compared with Him; He is the Everlasting Father. He is the Eternal One and they, excellent in strength though they are, are but created ones. But oh how they have loved Him! It was their greatest pleasure to fly at His will before He descended from Heaven to earth; He had but to speak and it was done; His angels were spirits and His ministers were flames of fire to do His will. Whatever had been the sacrifice He demanded of them, they would have thought it their highest deed to have performed His will. And when He left the shrine of the blessed to come to earth and to suffer, you know, my Brethren, how they followed Him along His starry road, how they would not leave Him till the last parting moment, and then their songs pursued Him down to earth, while they chanted, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." You know how ever afterwards they watched over Him, how they came to Him in the desert--His great battle with the enemy--and ministered to Him. You know how He was seen of angels all along His pilgrimage, how in the Garden there appeared unto Him an

angel strengthening Him. You understand how around the bloody tree they pressed in strong desire to see God in agonies, and wondered what it all could mean, until He said--"It is finished." They visited His tomb. An angel descended from Heaven to roll the stone away from the door of the sepulcher. Yes, more, angels formed His escort when He ascended up to the realms of Heaven! Well have we been taught to sing--

"They brought His chariot from on high, To bear Him to His Throne!
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried, The glorious work is done!"

You know how they bow before Him, casting their crowns at His feet, and how they join the everlasting song of "Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him who sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Do the angels love Him--the angels that have never tasted of His flesh, that never needed to be washed in His blood--and shall not my heart love Him? Spirits, spirits, spotless ones! Do you cry, "Worthy the Lamb"? My heart shall echo back your notes in louder strains--

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry, "To be exalted thus!" "Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply-- "For He was slain for us!"

Stand back Angels! Give to man the first place in love; you may adore, but you cannot love as we love, for He is our Brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. "He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." He is ours more than He is yours! He is Man, He was never angel. He is our Brother and Kinsman, our next in blood. Jesus, our souls must love You; we cannot permit even angels to be our rivals here; we will be jealous even of them. We press nearer to Your Throne than even they can do!

On each of these themes I am compelled to be short, though there is indeed room enough for expansion, "Oh love the Lord all you His saints," because your Brothers and Sisters who are caught up to the

third heavens love Him. And here let us just seek to bring this theme home to each one of us. How many dear friends and kinsfolk according to the flesh we have up yonder--where the clouds float not and winters are not known? Where tears trickle from no eyes and furrows mar no brows! Up yonder we have friends; we often speak of them as lost, but how foolish we are; they were never more truly found! Is that mariner lost who has escaped from a shipwrecked vessel and stands upon the Rock? No, no! They need not our pity; they might rather commiserate us, if there could be such a thing. We are struggling in the surf to reach the shore as they have done. And oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I think that whatever they do above should be sufficient example for us to do the like here below! And now, hark, hark how they sing before the Throne! I think among those glad voices I can distinguish some friends, of fellow-laborers here below; of parents, of husbands, of wives, of children, who here worshipped with us, but have now gone up yonder to the higher seats of the Divine Synagogue, to sing in nobler strains than we can do! Hark how they sing and what their theme--

"Jesus, the Lord their hearts employ Jesus, my love, they sing! Jesus, the life of both our joys, Sounds loud from every string!" And oh, how they love Him! I think I see them; they have no tears, but joy may moisten their eyes as they look at that dear face, and as they talk to one another with their hearts burning--burning with fiercer fire, and clearer flames than those favored disciples who went to Emmaus with their Lord! They say to one another, "How glorious He is, and we are like He!" I think I hear their sweet conversation as they count the crowns upon His brow; as they bow down and adore; as they stand up and admire, and then, transported with delight, fly into His arms again! With Him in Paradise continually, in sweet communion with Him--oh, how they love! We are such cold creatures; like icebergs are our

hearts--but theirs are like flames of fire! Oh, shall it not be enough to stir us up to love the Savior, when we think how they love Him who have crossed the Jordan and have gone before?

But, come, we will take another argument. Surely I need not say to you, let us love the Lord Jesus, because everything that could possibly honor our souls and compel our love is to be found in Him. There is a thing called beauty which wins upon the hearts of men. Strong Samson is weak as a child before its enchantment. Mighty men, not a few, have bowed before it and paid it homage; but if you want beauty, look into the face of Jesus! That marred visage has more loveliness in it than in all the smiles of Cleopatra or of the fabled maiden of days of yore! There is no beauty anywhere but in Christ! O sun, you are not fair, when once compared with Him. You stars, you are not bright, if you are set side by side with His eyes, that burn like lamps of fire! O fair world and grand creation of a glorious God, you are but a dim and dusky blot compared with the splendors of His face! When you shall see Christ, my Brothers and Sisters, you will be compelled to say that you never knew what loveliness was before! When the clouds are swept away, when the curtains that hide Him from your view are drawn aside, you will find that not anything you have seen will stand a moment's comparison with Him. You will be ready to break out, "O, black sun, black moon, dark stars, as compared with my lovely Lord Jesus!" I say, my Brethren, if you want one to love fairer than the children of men--One who shall always be worthy of your love, and always show to the eyes of others that there was a sufficient reason for your giving up your heart to Him--love Jesus, for there never was such beauty in the world as there is in Him!

Does wisdom still the love of men? Can he who is into martial triumphs, prowess and renown, subdue the hearty Daughters of Jerusalem, would you

love a hero? Go forth and meet King Jesus as He returns red from the battlefield, glorious in triumph! Do men sometimes give their love because they at first are led to reverence the character and then afterwards to esteem the person? Oh, think of the matchless Character of Christ Jesus! Were there ever such perfections as meet in Him? He has not the excellence of one man, but of allmen without the faults of any! He is not merely the Rose of Sharon, but He is the Lilly of the Valley. He may not only be compared at one time to the citron among the trees of the forest, but later He is as the goodly cedar! All types of beauty fail and "apples of gold in pictures of silver," lose their force when we come to treat of Him. We must coin new words before we can describe the excellences of Christ! In fact, we must have done with tongues, and go into that land where spirits utter their thoughts without the motion of lips or the expiration of breath, before we shall be able to express the surpassing beauty, the unuttered excellence of the glorious Character of Christ! Oh, love Him, then, you people of God! Love Him! Look into His face and see if you can help it. Look, I say, at His Character, and see if you can resist it! But I tell you, if you love Him not, it is because you do not know Him--

"His worth, if all the nations knew, Surely the whole earth must love Him, too."

It were impossible to know Christ and yet not to have the heart affected by Him; you must be overpowered by His charms. One look of His eyes, one touch of His hand shall ravish your heart. Once see His face and let Him but dart a glance at you, your two hearts must be united! Is your soul to you like a river rippling in its bed, alone? And is Christ yonder, like another river gloriously flowing towards the sea? Pray the Lord to bend the stream of your love till it falls into the river of His love, and then you shall be as two streams, whose banks

were once divisions, but both are now melted into one! You can then say with the Apostle, "For me to live is Christ." Run in the same channel--"and for me to die were gain." You shall be lost in the ocean, swallowed up in boundless and eternal love! "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints."

Yet once more--and this perhaps shall be the best argument I can give, the one which, after all, has the most effect upon us. We love Him--why? Because the Father loved Him? Oh no! We are too gross for that. Do we love Him because the angels love Him? We are not wise enough for that. Do we love Him because the redeemed love Him? I fear, my Brothers and Sisters, we are still too carnal for that. Do we love Him because of His own excellences? I know not, at first--that is an after attainment of Grace. We love Him, because He first loved us. Come, then, love Him, Oh you saints, because He first loved you!

Here is a theme before me which almost imposes silence on my tongue. There are some themes which make one wish that some teacher more able would accept the responsibility of explaining them, because we are afraid of marring their symmetry while we grapple with their details. The picture stretches out, as it were, before my mind's eye with dazzling glory, but I cannot sketch it so that others can see all its grandeur. Christ's love to us we sometimes guess at, but, ah, it is so far beyond our thoughts, our reasoning, our praises, and our apprehension, too, in the sweetest moments of our most spiritual ecstasy--who can tell it? "Oh, how He loved us!" When Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews exclaimed with surprise--"Behold how He loved him!" Verily you might say the like with deeper emphasis! There was nothing in you to make Him love you, but He left Heaven's Throne for you! As He came down the celestial hills, I think the angels said, "Oh, how He loved them." When He lay in the manger an Infant,

they gathered round and said, "Oh how He loves." But when they saw Him sweating in the Garden, when He was put into the crucible and began to be melted in the furnace--then indeed, the spirits above began to know how much He loved us! Oh Jesus! When I see You mocked and spit upon--when I see Your dear cheeks become a reservoir for all the filth and spittle of unholy mouths--when I see Your back torn with knotted whips--when I behold Your honor, and Your life both trailing in the dust--when I see You charged with madness, with treason, with blasphemy--when I behold Your hands and Your feet pierced, Your body stripped naked and exposed--when I see You hanging on the Cross between earth and Heaven in dire torments, and excruciating pain--when I hear You cry, "I thirst," and see the vinegar thrust to Your lips--when I hear Your direful cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" my spirit is compelled to say, "Oh how He loves!" He could die, but He could not cease to love! He could be torn in pieces, but He could not be torn away from His people! He could be buried in the grave, but His love could not be buried; it must live, it must exist, it cannot be taken from His chosen!

Think, too, my Brothers and Sisters, how much He must have loved you when you were going on in sin. You used to call His ministers hypocrites--His people fools; His Sabbaths were idle days with you; His Book, His precious Book, was unread; You never sought His Grace. Sometimes, perhaps, you used to curse Him, perhaps persecute Him in His children, and yet He loved you. And when His Spirit came after you, you tried to quench it. You would not attend the place where the arrow had first stuck in your conscience; you went to the theater; you tried to quench the Spirit, but His love would not be mastered by you. He had resolved to have you, and the Bridegroom would still your heart. Oh how He loved you, when He received you all black and filthy to His

bosom--gave you the kiss of His lips and saluted you as His own fair spouse! Since then, remember how He has watched over you in sickness; how He has carried you in His bosom when the road was rough; how He has covered you with His wings and nurtured you with His feathers? Think, I beseech you, how He seems to have moved Heaven and earth to bless you; how He has always had a ready ear to hear your prayer, and a swift foot to run to your immediate help! Remember this, above all things--how ill you have requited all His love! You have served Him but little, you have given Him the little ends--you have brought Him no sweet cane--neither have you filled Him with the fat of your sacrifices. You have given Him no bullocks out of your fold, no goats out of your flock; you have offered to Him the blind and the maimed; you have given Him sacrifice, but have you requited Him according to His kindness to you? He bled for you--have you resisted unto blood--striving against sin? He gave His whole Self for you--have you given your whole being up to Him? There was not a single nerve in His body which did not thrill with love to you; there was not a drop of blood which had not in its red fluid your name. Surely His body and soul was all yours--His humanity and His Godhead, too! And are you all His, and can you say--no, I will not ask you, you cannot say--that you have made a dedication to Him, as truly as He made for you?

Oh, love Him then, because of His love to you! I am sure you don't know how much He loved, because if you did, it would break your heart to think you love Him so little! Sweet Master, if You were here tonight to tell Your people how You love them, how would it break their hearts! I am a poor spokesman for You, Jesus! Would that You would speak Yourself! Come here--no, You are here! You are wherever two or three are met together. Come here to Your people, then, and wrap them in Your crimson vest and tell them all Your name! Speak unto them and say, "I

have loved you with an everlasting love." Shed Your love in their hearts! May they have an infinite consciousness of Your infinite, Your boundless, Your fathomless, Your endless love to them--and then Your work is done; there will be no need for Your poor servant to cry, "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints," for they will love You to the full!

II. In the second part of my subject I am now to show you some of THE EXCELLENCES OF LOVING JESUS.

"Oh love the Lord all you His saints." There are many excellences which come from love. Love is an ointment that gives forth a sweet smell--but better than that--it is an ointment which heals wounds, that gives health unto the marrow of the bones. Love has a wondrous power. It may seem but little in itself, but it makes men giants. He who bathes in the stream of love becomes invulnerable. No, he becomes omnipotent! Wherein he does not love, he is weak; but as far as he loves is he strong beyond all thought of weakness. Brothers and Sisters, one of the first things which love to Christ will do for you is it will make you bear suffering for Christ with joyousness. Remember the martyr Lambert, one of the earliest of the martyrs burnt for Christ's sake by the Papists? He was treated as badly as any could have been--for when tied to the stake, the firewood was green and the fire exceedingly slow, and he burnt away by slow degrees. His feet and legs were consumed while yet life was in the body! And that poor soul, when the fire was just about to take away life, though he had been hours burning, was seen to lift up such poor hands as he had--black and charred things--and clap them as best he could, and say, out of that poor black face that looked like a cinder in the flame, "None but Jesus. None but Jesus!" With that he rode in his chariot of fire up to Christ. Perhaps you have to endure some cruel mockings at times. It may be that to serve Christ becomes arduous work for you. Love Him, and you cannot tell how easy it will be

to suffer for Him! In fact, the more you have to suffer for Him, the more happy you will be. You will count it all joy. No, you will rejoice in that day, and leap for joy when you are allowed to suffer for the name of Him who suffered so much for you! As sure as ever you flinch at the little fire which these mild and gentle days can afford you; as sure as ever you start back at the faint rebukes which the world gives you now--you may infer that you don't love your Master as you ought! When you love Him, then will you feel that anything and everything that the world can do, can never move you from Him--

"The cords that bind around my heart, Tortures and racks may rend them off, But they can never, never part The hold I have on Christ my Lord!"

Love will not only make suffering easy, but further, it will make service joyous! Oh, don't you know in the Church how much shrinking there is from labor for Christ? Why is it in any Church that there are found Brothers and Sisters who are always for getting others to work and not wishing to do it themselves? It is lack of love, my Brethren, for as soon as ever we love, we shall be wanting to do something for Christ! When we love each other, what things we think of in order to give pleasure; with what solicitude does the wife think what she could do to bring the smile upon the husband's face; and how will the loving husband think of some means by which he can show his love to his wife! It is so with parents and with children. Have not you seen the mother sitting up night after night without any sleep, and yet she was not weary? Oh, she was very, very weary, but she did not know it--her love would not let her feel it! Have you ever seen the tender spouse watching over her husband at the brink of death, never taking her eyes from him, forgetting to eat bread, thinking of nothing but him? She sleeps as she sits in that chair; it is hardly for a moment. Did he start? She wakes. Was not the fever heavy on him? She is always awake.

All the while she holds on, though her eyes are red with sleeplessness. She says she could do it, and she certainly could do it, too, night after night and never fly! And so, do but get your heart full of love to Christ, and it is wondrous what you can do for Him! Nothing you can do for Him will be too much. See how the Moravians served their Master. There was an island in the West Indies upon which some of the Moravians came to land, and they wanted to preach the Gospel to the slaves. They asked what would be the condition upon which they would be allowed to land. The cruel terms were these--that they must themselves become slaves! Two of those Moravian Brothers became slaves; they bent their back to the lash that they might toil by day, in order to have the opportunity by night of preaching the Gospel to their poor black companions in captivity!

You will remember, too, that when there was found somewhere in Africa a place where there were lepers confined, persons whose limbs had rotted away with foul disease, two Moravians were found to go in there! And though they knew they could not come out alive, and that they must soon be the subjects of leprosy, themselves, and die by slow degree-- they were ready enough and willing enough to do it all! The love of the Moravians, Brothers and Sisters, seems to me to be one of the chief examples of what the love of every Christian should be. There should never be any choice nor stopping. Does Jesus want me here? Can He make better use of me dead than alive? Let me die! Will He be more honored in my poverty than in my wealth? Let me be poor! Will He be more glorified by my toil than by my rest, or by my sickness than by my health? Then be it so! As He surrendered all to the Father, so will I surrender all to Him! As the Father gave all into His hands, so will I give all into His hands to be His forever and ever! Love to Jesus will make all service for Him to be joyous.

Again--love to Christ will make obedience sweet. "Love makes our willing feet in swift obedience move." What things we will do for those we love that we would not do for anybody else! So for Christ we will do many things, because we love Him, without consulting our feelings, or considering whether any benefit is to accrue, or whether, as some say, it will be of any use. Be it absolutely a command, or more gently, a counsel--"whatever He says unto you, do it." Sometimes when I think of many good Brothers and Sisters here who know it to be their duty to be baptized in His name, and come to His Table and celebrate His ordinance in remembrance of Him--and they don't do it, though Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My Commandments"--I don't know what to say for them! I must let them speak for themselves. I sometimes think, surely if they loved their Master better, they would count obedience a pleasure! I think they would say, "I made haste and delayed not to keep Your Commandments," and they would be ready at once to run in the Lord's way, without making exceptions to any of His Commandments.

Still more, my Brothers and Sisters, love for Christ will make communion very sweet. How pleasant it is to talk to those in love. Give us a good friend and you have given us a very great blessing! A rainy day indoors with a good companion is very happy, but the best landscape on a sunny day, in the society of those for whom we have no affection, is but a poor thing. Let me be with Christ in the meanest place, rather than with the sinner in his high places. Luther used to say, "I would rather fall with Christ, than stand with Caesar." And might you not say you would rather be with Christ in poverty, than with anybody else in all the glory and grandeur of this world? Once love Christ and you will never be content to be far away from Him. You will say with the spouse, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among

the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet unto my taste." Friend, how long is it since you had fellowship with Christ? Ask the question round, Brothers and Sisters. Each man and each woman answer it. You are a Believer; your faith is in Christ; how long is it since you have seen your Master? How long since you have talked with Him? How long since He has spoken to you? Pass that question round again, I say, and let every man and woman answer it!

I am afraid there are some Christians who have not communion with Christ by the months together. No, I fear by years together! Oh, what Christians must you be! Where is that wife's love who never wishes for a husband's smile all through the year? Were there much affection between two friends who could live in the same house and not speak? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us examine ourselves and begin to doubt if we can be happy without fellowship with Christ! Christ is so precious to a Believer, that the Believer and Christ should be like two turtle doves that cannot fly unless they are in each other's company. Of the turtle dove it is said, that when its mate is gone you can nearer make the turtle consort with another, bring all the doves you will; it is a lonely dove and will not be consoled. There it sits and pines and coos itself to death, mourning for its mate! The only way to kill a Christian would be to take Christ from him. You might bring him other things, and yet never find another name, never another to whom his heart would be knit. No, if you took up all the saints who have been buried, you could never find one who the Believer could consort with as he has consorted with Christ and held fellowship with Him! Let us all be like the dove, then, and cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart!

I think there is no need to say any more on this point, or add another

syllable, except it be just this one--love to Christ will make trust easy. I say love to Christ will make trust easy. You have heard that often-told story of the wife on board ship who saw her husband cool and calm when the wind was blowing hurricanes and the masts were creaking. She asked how it was, and the husband, reaching a sword, ran toward her, put it to her very breast, and the wife didn't start for a minute. "Wife," he said, "how is it you are not afraid?--this sword is sharp." "Oh," she said, "but it is in my husband's hand." "Well," he said, "and though that wind is terrible, it is in my Father's hands." Love can trust under any circumstances! It is amazing how some men have been betrayed into trust. You could not excuse them at first; they have shaken hands, and become security for another, because they really loved the person so much that they could not think it possible he could deceive them. And we must not be too severe, because we don't know the circumstances between the two in these cases. We love because we cannot help it; we trust where we love. How the child trusts the mother! The mother has lost her way; she is on a bleak hill; the snow is falling and she cannot find the trail. The path is covered, and there may be a wolf in the distance, and the mother may hear it, but the infant does not start. It sleeps on her breast, and if it wakes, it toys with the mother's cheeks and while she is full of alarm, it knows no fear because it loves. And see how the child will jump into your arms, though he is at some height--and if he should fall, he would hurt himself. "I will catch you, child," and it is done! He jumps! And so, where there is love, there will be trust.

Do you find it hard to believe Christ? Love Him more and it will be easy! Do you find it hard to think that all things will work together for your good? Love Him and you will be sure of it; you will be quite sure of it! "It cannot be," you say, "that my sweet Lord Jesus will

ever do me an ill turn; I love Him so well, and He loves me so well. Let Him smite me and I will kiss His hand! I am sure that He means it in love; it is but a love pat upon a child. Even when He frowns at me, I will still believe that He has a smiling face, only He conceals it to make better known the purpose of His Grace. Yes, though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. I will say, He did it, I will trust in Him.

Thus, Brothers and Sisters, I think I have given you ample reasons for loving Christ. As for those of you who have never trusted Him, I cannot say to you, love Him. Trust Him, first, and you shall love Him afterwards. Give your soul up into His hands! I charge you by the living God, have done with your self-righteousness, and flee to Christ who has bled on the Cross, and when you have been washed in His blood and robed in His righteousness, then shall you love Him! O Jesus, O Jesus, come forth and will men's hearts tonight! You heavenly Lover, our sweet Master, come, we beseech You! When I tell Your story, men will not love You. No, should I tell it with tears in my eyes, they would not believe me. Come, tell it Yourself to them. On their way home break their hearts in love to you! May they tonight fulfill the verse we have often sung in Your honor--

"Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

Jesus! Bring the wanderers home. Reclaim Your lost sheep! May there be joy on earth and joy in Heaven, over sinners whom You have found, sinners whom You did come to seek and to save. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house." The Lord add His blessing for Jesus' sake.

Chapter 39

Everywhere And Yet Forgotten

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 29, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Who knows not in all these that tie hand of the Lord has worked this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind."

Job 12:9,10.

THESE verses occur in Job's answer to Zophar the Naamathite. Job had his failings, but certainly he appears less faulty in this dialog than those three men who sought to reprove him and convict him of error. Zophar the Naamathite had the very highest opinion of his own personal wisdom. He addressed Job as though he had been an inferior. And all in the 11th Chapter he used language which though extremely beautiful, must have been very grating upon the ears of such a sufferer as Job; for it is a lecture full of high-flown language, abounding in poetry, and noble images, but containing little solid sense and less sympathy. Job, being exceedingly irritated both with the style and with the matter of Zophar's speech, begins at once to pluck off his plumes and to pull to pieces his fine language. In biting irony Job cries from his dunghill--"No doubt but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you; yes, who knows not such things as these?" You have put into flowery language things which an ordinary observer might discover! You have pointed to the Heaven above and to the depth beneath, to prove a truth which the creeping insects of the earth could tell you, and which the fishes of the sea might proclaim! "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach you; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell you--or speak

to the earth and it shall teach you--and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto you. Who knows not in all these that the hand of the Lord has worked this?"

There is much temper here, but there is also very much of good common sense. I wish we had another Job to chastise the high-sounding language of modern theologians. There are starting up in our midst, men, who if they are not heretics in doctrine, are aliens in speech. They are men described by the old preachers who say, "Mark!" but there is nothing to mark; and who shout, "Observe!" but there is nothing to observe, except the lack of everything that is worth observing! We know ministers who cannot speak in the common language of mankind, but must adopt the jargon of Carlyle, who sets language on its head, and puts the last word first! These men must make the English language a slave to the German--the glorious grand old Saxon must buckle to their heresies and conceal the depths of their lies! I pray God the time may come when some man may unmask them; when all these wind-bags may be torn, and all these bladders may be pricked--when teachers have anything to tell us, if they will deliver themselves so that all can understand. If they cannot use plain language, let their tongues go to school till they have learned it! There is something so enticing and yet so flimsy in the modern theological school, that I feel compelled to warn you constantly against it--its mystery is absurdity and its depth is pompous ignorance! There is no theology in it; it is a futile device to conceal the need of theological knowledge! A man with an education that may be complete in every department except that in which he should excel, stands up and would teach Christians that all they have learned at the feet of Paul has been a mistake; that a new theology has been discovered--that the old phrases which we have used are out of date--the old creeds broken up! Well, what shall we do to this wiseacre

and his fellow sages? Serve them? Wherever you meet them or their disciples, as Job did Zophar--laugh at them, dash their language to pieces, and remind them that the best things they tell us are only what the fishes of the sea, or the fowls of the air knew before them, and that their grandest discoveries are but platitudes which every child has known before, or else they are heresies that ought to be scouted from the earth!

The Truth of God upon which Job spoke was this--he wished to show that the fact of the Presence of God in all things was so clearly discernible, that men need not borrow the eagle's wing to mount to Heaven; nor need they enter into the heart of the Leviathan to find a chariot wherein to enter the depths of the sea. "No," he said, "no! The present Deity the beasts proclaim." The actual existence and the constant working of the Eternal God is sung by the very fowls of Heaven, and the mute fishes of the sea leap up, and in their joyous reaping, seem to say, "The sea is His and He made it!" This Doctrine I wish to bring out this morning. Or, rather, thus would I speak of it.

First, the present hand of God everywhere in the universe. Secondly, our present and complete dependence upon that hand of God. And then let us learn some useful lessons from the whole subject of Divine Providence. I. The first Doctrine is THE PRESENT HAND OF GOD.

1. That there is a God you need not that I should prove--that God is here, and there, and everywhere, you also firmly believe. But, alas, it is one thing to believe this Truth of God and quite another thing to hold it in perpetual remembrance! We may write it down far more easily upon the tables of our creed than upon the tablets of our memory. In fact, this is one of the Doctrines which all men are constantly forgetting; and even the righteous may often check themselves because they begin to degenerate into the fools who say in their hearts, "There

is no God here." Strange is it that the name of the Lord should be written everywhere so clearly, that even the blind might see it; and yet man is so doubly dark, that he does not observe his God even where God is most manifest and visible! I think, my Brothers and Sisters, this forgetfulness of God is growing upon this perverse generation. Time was, in the old Puritan days, when every shower of rain was seen to come from Heaven, when every ray of sunshine was blessed, and God was thanked for having given fair weather to ingather the fruits of the harvest. Then, men talked of God as doing everything! But in our days where is our God? We have the laws of matter. Alas, alas, that names with little meaning should have destroyed our memory of the Eternal One! We talk now of phenomena, and of the chains of event, as if all things happened by machinery--as if the world were a huge clock which had been wound up in eternity, and continued to work without a present God! No, not only our philosophers, but even our poets rant in the same way; they sing of the works of Nature. But who is that fair goddess, Nature? Is she a heathen deity, or what? Do we not act as if we were ashamed of our God, or as if His name had become obsolete?

Go abroad wherever you may, you hear but little said concerning Him who made the heavens, and who formed the earth and the sea--everything is "nature," and the "laws of motion," and of "matter." And do not Christians often use words which would lead you to suppose that they believed in the old goddess, Luck, or rested in that equally false deity, Fortune, or trembled before the demon of Misfortune? Oh for the day when God shall be seen, and little else beside! Better, my Beloved, that philosophical discoveries were lost, than that God should be concealed behind them! Better that our poets had ceased to write, and that all their flaming words were buried with their ashes, than that they should serve as a cloud before the face of the Eternal Creator! We

must go back again to the remembrance of our God, and especially must the true Believer make the worldling feel that the Christian has a God with him, a God about him, and a God within him; One who is his constant Companion and his Friend! So act, my Brothers and Sisters, that men may be compelled to say of you, "That man has a God whom he observes in all the events of his family, ascribing to His Divine hand every sickness that falls upon his child, and every loss that occurs to him in his business." My Brothers and Sisters, it is a doleful truth that there is nothing more easy to forget than the grand Doctrine that God is everywhere at work in the midst of us all!

2. Now, let me proceed to say that though this is a Truth so frequently forgotten, it is a fact of universal force. God works ever and everywhere. There is no place where God is not! You may traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side till you can see but a strip of the blue sky; you may be the only traveler who has passed through that glen; the birds may start up frightened, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of man; but God was there of old, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flower cups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of His mouth! Or, descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the sea where the water sleeps undisturbed; the very sand is motionless in eternal quiet, but the footsteps of the Lord are there, reigning within the silent palace of the sea! You may borrow the wings of the morning, and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there; mount to the highest Heaven, or dive into the deepest Hell, and God is in both--hymned in everlasting song, or howled in eternal tortures! Everywhere and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work.

And not merely, my Friends, in every place, but in every time the Lord is present. From the beginning of the year even to the end thereof,

there is God! His eyes never sleep, His hands never rest. In the silent watches of midnight when the city sleeps, God is the Watchman, and when the sun wakes up and draws aside the curtains of the night, the Lord is abroad before him--on the waters, and on the snow-white summits of the mountains--and when again high noon is gained, and all the world is busy with its toil and God forgotten, He is there amid the throng of men as well as in the deserts' wilds! Every place feels His footsteps, and every time trembles at His Presence. From everlasting to everlasting, O God, You are sensibly felt in every passing moment! The pulsing of the eternal sea of time are caused by You, and there never is an instant when You have fled and left us to ourselves!

And as in every place and every time, so in every event there is God! Is the earth shaken by inward convulsions? It is God that heaves the mountains to and fro. Or, do the valleys laugh in the sunshine, and do the rejoicing farmers carry home their harvests? God is manifest right there in the lavish bounty of his hands. The greatest political disasters are predestinated, guided and overruled by God. When an Attila scourges the earth, and reddens her soil with blood, his steps are ordered, arranged and foreordained, as much as the flight of the eternal angel who shall blow the trumpet of the Gospel and proclaim the year of Jubilee! There is no event, however base and vile, however grand and good, which is not within the management of the dread Supreme! His dominion has no limit. Even the dark gulf of evil is spanned by the bridge of His wisdom. Journey onward till you seem to go where goodness is not found and Grace is all eclipsed-- He dwells there in the thick darkness! He makes the clouds His chariot, and yokes the whirlwinds to His cart. Be of good cheer, Beloved, in every event you may behold your God! If invasion should ravage this fair island, if tyrants should set their foot on the neck of your liberties, if the

streets should run with blood--God is even there, Supreme--His people still secure! And if it is so, that God is in every event, permit me to remind you that God is where there is no event When there is a lull upon the waters and all is stagnant; when political affairs are quiet; when in the lesser world of your own house, and your own soul, there is a dead calm, perhaps the woeful prelude of a tempest--God is there! Great God, You stand in the midst of the silent desert, where not even the hum of the bee disturbs the dread solemnity of stillness! You are far down in the cleft of the rock where creature could not live! No, in the heart of the solid adamant, You have Your palace, and beneath the surging of the ever-tossing sea You have a tabernacle. In the unknown ravine, the untraversed gorge, the Lord Jehovah has His dwelling place! He keeps yon rocks from tottering to their fall; He swells those rivers till they roll along; Let Him but remove His hand, and earth's pillars totter to their fall, Creation reels, and the universe expires! As dies the spark struck from the steel, so dies Creation if God ceases to be present there. Oh, learn then evermore, that not only in His doings but in His resting; not only in His acting but in His standing still, God is most manifest to you if you will but see Him--if your eyes, anointed with heavenly eye salve, are but open to behold your Father and your King! This, I may well say, is a Truth of God which though much forgotten, is of universal force!

3. Let me proceed a little further and remind you that this is a Truth of God worthy of perpetual remembrance. Do not look at it as a mere speculation. I beseech you, do not think of a present God as a fact in which you have no interest. There is scarcely a Truth in the compass of Revelation which is more instructive, profitable, and consoling to the people of God than this--a present God in everything! Come, let me show you how worthy a remembrance it is. You have many mercies. Your God is

in them all. Does not that thought sweeten the bread you eat? Will it not give a relish to the water that you drink? The air you breathe, the clothes that are on your back--God is in each of them. Go to your home, where your best pleasures dwell--your own sweet home, be it ever so homely--and when you look on your mercies say, "I see my gracious God here." Cast your eyes upon the prattlers who climb your knee, and remember that they are a heritage from the Lord. Look at her who is the partner of your bosom, and see God's love and kindness in so good a gift. Look on all the prosperity that attends your business, look on your growing crops, and your green fields, and see God in every mercy you receive! I would not have the worldling's wealth, for it is a wealth that came not from God! At least so far as he is concerned, it came not from a father's hands. But oh, to have benefits, every one of which smells of the treasury out of which it came! To look on your gold and on your silver, no, on your very penny--and see the impress of your God stamped there more clearly than the image of Caesar's own self! To sit down to your table, and eat, and drink, and feel that every meal is a sacrament; that every robe you wear is a vestment sent from Heaven; that in all these mercies there is the hand of a Covenant, promise-keeping God--why it will make you live a noble life! It was thought by the old heathens to be the grandest thing they could say of a man, that he should one day eat at the tables of the gods. My Brothers and Sisters, we eat at these tables every day! At the table of my God I feast, and from His cup I drink! I have nothing which I have not received from Him; the Lord has given me all that I have!

But if it is very sweet to see God in our mercies, it is most consoling to discern Him in all our trials. Say not these are evil times. No times are evil where God is, for His Presence scatters all that is ill. Say not that you dwell in an evil place.

There is no evil place to the man who dwells with God. Think not that evil circumstances have happened to you. They seem to be big with evil, but those clouds shall break in blessings on your head! Oh, if you can but look at your troubles as sent from God, it will take the sharpness from them, and turn them from wasps that sting, into bees that gather honey! Say, now, when your family is sick, "The Lord has placed His hand upon my wife, and on my children." When your treasure vanishes away, say, "The Lord has put His hands into my coffers, and emptied them." And when the ship is wrecked, say, "The Lord has my vessel on the rocks." And when the corn is spoiled, and the harvest is not gathered, say, "The Lord has sent the rain from Heaven. He has done it." Join with Job, the author of our text, and exclaim, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord!" Regard not the second causes but the first cause; not the trying creature, but the supporting Creator!

If it is pleasant to see God in our trials, I add it is very seasonable to remember Him in our dangers. To be at sea when every timber creaks in the ship, and when the mast is strained, and then to feel, "He holds the waves in the hollow of His hands;" to stand in places where the danger is present, and terrible, and then to say, "My Father's shield is over me;" to walk through the midst of plague and pestilence, through the valleys that are steaming with mist, and malaria, and to feel that God holds our breath, and that all the arrows that Death ever stored within his quiver can never find a place in our heart until Jehovah bids them--oh, these things are sweet and pleasant! A man is never in danger when he feels this! At God's command, through Death's dominions and through Hell's domains, a man might march securely trusting in the voice which cries, "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God."

A present God! My Beloved, I cannot suggest a theme that may make you more full of courage in times of danger and trouble! I think I need not enlarge upon this point further than to add, you will find it exceedingly helpful and consoling if you can discover God in your trifles. Our life is made up of trifles, and if we had a God only for the great things, and not for the little things, we would be miserable, indeed! If we had a God of the Temple, but not a God of the tents of Jacob, where would we be? But blessed be our heavenly Father, He who wings an angel, guides a sparrow; He who rolls a world along, molds a star and marks its orbit when it trickles from its source! There is a God in the motion of a grain of dust blown by the summer's wind, as much as in the revolutions of the stupendous planet! There is a God in the sparkling of a firefly, as truly as in the flaming comet! Carry home, I beseech you, to your houses the thought that God is there--at your table, in your bedchamber, in your workroom and at your counter. Recognize the doing and Being of God in every little thing. Think for a moment, and you will find that there are many promises of Scripture giving the sweetest consolation in trivial matters. "He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands." Why? Lest you fall from a precipice? Lest you dash yourself from a pinnacle? No, "Lestyou dash your foot against a stone." A little danger, but a great Providence to ward us from it! And what also says the Scripture? Does it say, "The very days of your life are numbered?" It says not so, though that were true, but it says, "the very hairs off yourheadare all numbered." And what says the Scripture, yet again? Does it say, "The Lord knows the eagles and not an eagle falls to the ground without your Father?" No. But, "are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." A great God in little things, I am sure,

will spare you a world of vexation if you will but remember this, for it is hence our vexations come. We often get into a bad temper about a trifle, when a great trial does not agitate us. We are angry because we have scalded ourselves with a little water or have lost a button from our clothes, and yet the greatest calamity can scarcely disturb us. You smile, because it is true with all of you. Job himself, who said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away," might have grown angry because of some rough edge in his potsherd. Take care that you see God in little things, that your mind may be always calm and composed, and that you be not foolish enough to suffer a trifle to overcome a saint of God.

II. Now, my dear Friends, having thus brought forward the Doctrine of a God present everywhere, let me remind you of the second head--OUR ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE UPON A PRESENT GOD AT THIS VERY MOMENT. We are absolutely dependent upon the will and pleasure of God for our life, our comforts, our means to enjoy our comforts, and especially for all spiritual blessings.

First, then, our life is entirely dependent upon God. One sees strange sights in journeying--scenes which will never be erased from the memory. It was but a few days ago, just under a tremendous rock, I saw a vast mass of broken stones, and earth tossed about in wild confusion and raised in huge hillocks. My driver said to me, "That is the grave of a village." Some years ago, there lived upon that spot a joyful and happy people. They went forth to their daily work, they ate, they drank--as men do to this day. One time they saw a great crack in the mountain that hung overhead. They heard alarming noises, but they had heard such sounds before, and the old men said, "There might be something coming," but they did not know. Suddenly, however, without further notice, the whole side of the hill was in motion, and before

the villager could escape from his hut, the village was buried beneath the fallen rocks! And there it lies; and neither bone of man, nor piece of the habitation of man has ever been discovered in the wreck. So thoroughly was everything crushed and buried, that nothing by the most diligent search could ever be discovered! There are many villages standing in a like position at this day. I passed another spot, where there was a shelving mountain with its layers slanting towards the valley. A town which had been built at the foot, had been entirely covered and a lake filled up by one tremendous slide from the top of the hill. Yet, there stand new houses, and men venture to live among the graves of their sires! We are apt to say, "How these people ought to look up every morning and say, 'O Lord, spare this village.'" Standing there where they might be crushed in a moment, where the slightest motion of the earth within would bring down the hill upon them, they ought to lift up their hearts to the Preserving One and say, "Oh keeper of Israel, keep us both day and night." Ah, but my Friends, you and I are in the same position! Though no crags overhang our homesteads; though no mountain threatens to leap upon our city--yet are there a thousand gates to death--there are other agencies beside these which can hurry mortals to their tombs. You are sitting today as near to the jaws of death, as those villagers who are dwelling there. Oh that you felt it! One breath choked up, and you are dead! Perhaps your life is a thousand times in danger every moment. As many times as there are ebbing and flowing of the blood, as many times as there are breathing from the lungs--so many times does your life hang in such jeopardy that it only needs your God to will it, and you fall dead in your seat--and are carried out a pale lifeless corpse!

There are parts of the mountain passes of the Alps of such danger to the traveler, that when you traverse them in winter, the muleteers

muffle the bells of their beasts, lest the faintest sound should bring down an avalanche of snow and sweep you into the bottomless precipice beneath! Then, one would think, the traveler must feel that he is in God's hands. Yes, but you are in the same position now, though you see it not! Open but the eyes of your spirit, and you may see the avalanche overhanging you today, and the rock trembling to its fall at this very moment. Only let your soul behold the latent lightning that God conceals within His hands, and you may soon see that to crush a gnat with your finger is not as easy for you, as for God to take away your life now, or whenever He pleases! As it is with our life, my Brothers and Sisters, so is it with the comforts of life. What would life be without its comforts? Much more, what would it be without its necessities? And yet how absolutely dependent are we upon God for the bread which is the staff of life! I never felt more truly the dependence of man upon his God than I did last Friday week. At the foot of the Alpine pass of the Splugen, I saw in the distances the whole road black, as if it had been spread over with heaps of black earth. As we neared it, we discovered it was a group of locusts in full march--tens of thousands of myriads of them! As we drew nearer, they divided as regularly as if they had been an army and made room for the carriage. No sooner was it passed than the ranks were filled up again, and they went on in their devouring march. On we went for several miles and there was nothing to be seen except those creatures, literally covering the ground here and there in thick layers like a shower of black snow! Then I realized the language of the Prophet--"Before them was like Eden; behind them was a desert." They had eaten up every green blade! There stood the Indian corn with just the dry stems, but every green particle was gone. In the front of their march you saw the vines beginning to ripen and the fields of grain hastening to perfection.

There stood the poor cottager at his door. The wheat that he had planted and the vines that he had tended, must all be eaten and devoured before his eyes! The pastures were literally alive with these fiery creatures. When they first entered the field, there was green pasture for the cows of the poor cottagers; let them stop there an hour, and you might take up the dust by handfuls, and nothing left besides! "Ah," said my guide, "it is a sad thing for these poor people--in a month's time those creatures will be as big and as long as my finger and then they will eat up the trees--the mulberry trees with which the poor men feed their silkworms and which furnish them with a little wealth--they will devour every green thing until there is nothing left but the bare dry stem!"

Ah, I thought within myself, if God can thus sweep this valley and make a waste of it with these little creatures, what a mercy it is that He is a kind and gracious God, or else He might let loose the same on all the people of the earth, and then nothing would stare us in the face but famine, despair and death! Perhaps you say to me, "Ah, but we do not expect the locusts here; we shall gather our harvests joyously." Speak not too quickly. God has been teaching us during the last two months our absolute and entire dependence upon Him. Let this rain continue but a little longer, let it continue till the appointed weeks of harvest shall come, and where are our people then? You may open your shops, you citizens of London, and you may imagine that the harvest in the country will little affect you. But famine stares you in the face unless God withdraws the clouds, and bids the sun shine down upon us! The days shall come which we have heard our fathers speak of, when the bread was such that it could not be eaten; when it was not hard enough for one to hold in his hand; when you had a crust without, and then within it was a mass ofjelly--wheat swimming in water, and not capable

of being eaten by any except those pinched by hunger! The like must inevitably come unless God withdraws those clouds. Let the rain continue much longer, and there will scarcely be a harvest, nothing for men to feed upon. Oh, my dear Friends, we never know from year to year how dependent--how absolutely dependent we are upon God! Does not the wheat spring out of the land? And does not every man, from the king to the peasant, live on bread? And if that staff fails, must not all totter to the ground with leanness on our bones and paleness on our faces? You are for that bread, and for that nourishment, and for all you have--as absolutely dependent upon God as a prisoner in his dungeon is dependent upon his keeper for his daily bread and water! Oh that I could make you feel this and realize the force of the fact!

Again--I said we were not simply dependent upon God for the comforts, but for the power to enjoy the comforts. It is an evil which we have seen under the sun--a man who had wealth, and riches, and plenty, but who had not power to eat thereof. I have seen a man hungry and full of appetite, but no bread to eat. But I have seen a sight perhaps more sad--a man with food of the most luxurious kind--to whom taste seemed denied, to whom every mouthful was a thing of detestation! The Lord has but in His judgment to smite any of us with only nervousness--that nervousness at which the strong may laugh, but which makes the weak tremble--and everything will become dark before you. He has but to affect some portion of your body, and you shall see no brightness in the sun; the very fields shall lose their verdure before you; the most happy event shall only be a source of deeper gloom; you shall look on everything through a dark glass, and see nothing but darkness and despair. He has but to touch you with sickness, and motion may be misery, and even to lie upon a bed may be a repetition of tortures as you toss from side to side! Worse still, the Lord has but to put His

finger on your brain, and you become a raving lunatic, or what may seem better, but more despicable, a driveling idiot! Oh, how little, then, has He to do to overturn your all, to pull down that mighty castle of your joys, and darken the windows of your hope! You are, again, for life, for necessities, for comforts, as absolutely in the hand of God as the clay upon the wheel is in the hand of the potter! You may rebel, but your rebellion is but the writhing of a worm! You may murmur, but your murmurs cannot affect Him. You may ask your comrades to join in league with you against the Almighty God, but His purpose will stand fast and you must submit! Bound in the iron chains of destiny, you must go the way He bids you, and you must suffer or you must rejoice at His beck and will! Tremble, oh, Man; tremble before God, for never was creature in the hand of creature, as creature is in the hand of Creator!

Let me briefly remark, that if this is true concerning temporals, how doubly true is it with regard to spiritual things. There is no Christian Grace which has in it a particle of self-existence. Faith, love, courage--are all sweet flowers--but their roots are in God. There may be streams of gratitude in your heart, but the springs thereof are in Him. Your soul may be devoted and consecrated, but the locks of your devotion will be shorn off, as was the hair of Samson, unless the eternal God preserves it. If you and I shall endure to the end, if we shall pass through the Valley of Death with calmness, if we shall stand before the Throne of God with confidence, if we shall enter into bliss with joy--all these things must come of God! Let Him lock up the treasury of His Grace, or dry up the channel of His Love--the noblest Christian who breathes, would become the vilest of reprobates--and he who has best served his God, would become the most abject minion of Hell! Oh, learn that you are absolutely dependent upon God! He can

leave you, and where are you? He can help you, and you shall stand securely. So is it with the sinner--he is in God's hands to save him or to destroy him! He can give him up, like Pharaoh, to hardness of heart, or He can melt his heart, and bow his stubborn will. He can throw the reins upon his neck and say, "Let him alone, Ephraim is given unto idols." Or He can make him willing in the day of His power, create in him a new heart, and a right spirit, and save him from the wrath to come! O God, You are over all and You are all! Man is nothing before You. You have Your will. You do as You please among the angels in Heaven and among the inhabitant of this lower world! "Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."

III. I come to my third and last point, namely, THE LESSONS FROM THIS SUBJECT. First, a few lessons to the saint, and then to the sinner.

To the saint first. Child of God, see where you are. You, even you, are completely in the hands of your God! Your life, your death, your prosperity in this world, your growth in Grace, your peace--all things rest upon His Sovereign will. Nothing can harm you, unless He bids it; nothing can cheer you, unless He commands it; you rest not in your own hands. Be your will ever so headstrong, be your mind ever so stubborn, either you must yield cheerfully, or else you must bend unwillingly. You are absolutely, and entirely, and in every respect, placed at the will and disposal of Him who is your God! And now, child of God, let me ask you this question. Are you grieved because of this? Does this Doctrine trouble you? Let God lay aside His scepter--are you prepared to wield it? Had you rather have followed your will than be at God's disposal? Would you rather that He should be in everything, and that He should do as He wills, or that it should be left to you? Oh, I see you, you countless armies of God--I see you bow your knees at once, and cry, "O Lord, we bless You that it is not so! We praise You that You have

left nothing to our disposal, but that You have sway everywhere." This is not the subject of groaning, but of mirth and joy to us! We set up our banners with this watchword, "The Lord reigns." We go on our journey with this as our constant cordial, "God is here." With this as our shield, we lift up our arm against calamity! With this as our sword, we rush into the thick of the battle against sin! The Lord reigns--"Let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." Great God, if I could have it otherwise, I would not. If I could reverse Your decision, and if I could erase the lines of trial, and write in the place thereof, the gilded lines of joy, I couldnot, and I wouldnot do it! If the book of my destiny were in my power today, I neither would erase a word nor insert a syllable; be it unto me even as You will! "Not my will but Yours be done." It is easy to say this, but oh, how hard to felit when it comes to the trial! We must pray, that when darkness fills the sky, when the coffin lies in the silent chamber, and the precious one is sleeping in the arms of death; when the tide has swept away all we have, when beggary stares us in the face, when slander follows us at the back, still to say, "Jehovah, Your tempests are better than my sunshine, and the storm which You have brewed is better to me than the brightest days if I had made them for myself." Take care, child of God, that you hold fast and firm this, your confidence, which shall have great recompense of reward!

But mind one other thing, O heir of Heaven. Let your conversation be such as becomes this Doctrine! Speak of what you will do, and of what will happen, always in respect to the fact that man proposes, but God disposes. When you hear your enemy vow something against you, smile, because your enemy is not God! And when you propose to yourself something which seems to you good and pleasant, weep over your own folly if you are too confident, for you are not God! None but God can

promise so as to cheer a sensible mind; none but God can threaten so as to alarm a Christian mind. The threats and promises of God are true, but neither the threats of man nor his promises are worth the words in which they are uttered! Oh, my dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, tried as some of you are in various and in arduous ways, I wish I could burn this Truth of God into your souls! But God the Holy Spirit must do it. I pray you stand to it that there is God in everything, and I am sure as the result of it, you will be driven to more constant and earnest prayer. For if there is God in everything, take everything to God! If God has done you in, take the ill to God and He will set it right. This very season of the year suggests prayer. Prayer can reverse the winds, and stay the clouds, and let the infidel world see it is so. In the days of that eminent Scotch minister, Robert Blair, there had been for a long time a terrible rain, until at the time of harvest the wheat had grown an inch long after it had ripened. The people met together for prayer, and that day it rained more furiously than it had done before. Yet they separated in the firm belief that God had heard their prayer. Mr. Blair said to the assembly that he was sure, though God might seem as if he mocked them, yet He was still a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. That night the clouds were scattered and driven away and the harvest was gathered in. Some of the wheat had been spoiled, but most of it was housed in safety. Trust your God, then! Tempt Him not by murmuring. But prove Him--not as the children of Israel did--but prove Him as Malachi exhorts us, and see if He will not pour out blessings, and make the earth rejoice with the harvest! At any rate, be not as they who tremble in the day of calamity. Stand still, you children of God. You wear an armor that no weapon of man can pierce! You dwell within a city, the bulwarks of which are impregnable! Let no fear invade you! Be strong and of good courage--your God is with

you. He is better than all your fears! No, He shall exceed all your hopes! Set up your banners, and shout aloud, and rejoice in Him. God is with you, and the Lord Jehovah reigns!

In conclusion, my last word is to the sinner. You, who have not been converted, and have no part or lot in present salvation, to you I say this much--Man! Woman! You are in the hands of God. Whether you shall live to reach your home today or not, depends absolutely upon His will! Rich though you are, the wealth you possess can take to itself wings and fly away at His will. He can fill your body with pains so terrible that you shall long for death, itself, to escape from them. He can make visions flit before your eyes, both when you sleep and when you wake, that shall so scare you that you would prefer the company of the devils in Hell to solitude! God can make you such a Hell to yourself, that you would seek either knife or poison to escape from your own thoughts--and that He can do, and you cannot escape--no wings can bear you above His dominion! No depth can hide you from His sway! But now, what is the path of wisdom? Is it wise to curse God, in whose hands your breath is? Is it a rational thing to treat with indifference Him upon whom you depend for time and for eternity? Your own self-interest would dictate a wiser course! Dash not your head against the bosses of His buckler. Be not mad enough to run upon His glittering spear. What does wisdom say to you if you will but listen? It cries, "Be reconciled to God." You cannot resist Him effectually--throw down your weapons and yield!

And what does the Scripture say to you? It says, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." What says the Church to you? It says, "Christ has received us--the Bride says, come." What says Christ to you? "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake." "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

"Bow the knee and kiss the Son, lest He is angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." Oh, Spirit of God, speak to the madmen and make them sane! Speak to the men who fight against God, and bid them tremble at Him, and yield and seek His favor! O Sinner, remember what He has said, "He who being often reproved, hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Hear you, in conclusion, those sweet Words of His--"Whoever will, let him come. The Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who is thirsty come. And whomever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Chapter 40

Vessels Of Mercy--A Sermon Of Self-Examination

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 5, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"And that He might make known the riches of His Glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

Romans 9:23,24.

IT is with no view to controversy that I have selected this text, but for a far higher and more practical purpose, namely, that by this Truth of God, many of us may search ourselves, and that we may be able to discover whether we have any of the marks of the vessels of mercy which God has prepared beforehand for glory. We must take the next verse to complete our text--"even us, whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

The context invites us to visit the potter's house. There, in the workshop, you perceive sundry vessels in process of formation. The wheel is revolving, and from it you see continually taken, vessels of an ignoble sort, fitted only for the very meanest purposes. On the other hand, from the same clay you see produced vessels that might grace the palace of a king--vessels of honor fit for honorable purposes. We now conduct you to a greater workshop--to the Great Potter's house of Providence. Continually revolving is the wheel of circumstances; men, like masses of clay, are placed upon it, but they are not all fashioned alike. There are some men who are evidently to the casual observer, vessels not adapted for the high and honorable occupations of Heaven and glory. There are men who, every time the wheel revolves, become worse in character and more depraved in mind;

there are men who, by the very Providence which is blessed to others, become more complete adepts in iniquity and masters in crime. On the other hand, with pleasure you may perceive that on the same wheel there are some vessels, which, touched by the skillful hand of the Great Potter, are being daily more and more finished and completed and you can soon perceive that they are not of the same sort as those we have just now passed by. They are intended for higher uses and nobler purposes. In fact, they are preparing to stand at last, in the midst of Paradise, the glorious trophies of the skill and power of the Great Maker!

As my sermon is intended to be practical and not controversial, I shall solemnly invite each hearer to tremble lest he should belong to the reprobate and abandoned vessels of wrath. I speak with the deepest sorrow when I ask the question, with the probability, no, the almost certainty that it must be answered in the affirmative. Are there not some of you, here present, who are being fitted for destruction? God is not fitting you, you are fitting yourselves, by daily developing and indulging the depravity of your heart. You are seeking out every new pleasure and every new sin, and though often warned to turn from your course of evil, are there not some of you who are rushing headlong to destruction? Are not many of you, by a course of sin and folly, ripening yourselves for the great harvest of the Lord? Are you not making yourselves ready to be as stubble fully dried, cast into the oven of His wrath? This is not to be laid to the charge of God, but at your own door, the guilt must be! If you perish--any one of you--on your own head shall be your blood! The eternal God is not guilty of the murder of men's souls--they who die and sink in Hell are suicides--they have rejected mercy, they have despised the Savior, they have chosen sin and hated holiness. As was their choice, such is their portion! As

was their rebellious will on earth, such must be their tormented destiny forever. Oh, if I could see with an infallible glance, the hearts and consciences of all present, might I not, as I cast my eyes along these seats, say of such an one, and of such an one--even in the judgment of charity--"that man is preparing for destruction?" His crimes demand punishment, his spirit is of such a character that he requires to dwell forever at a distance from God! His will is so headstrong, his intentions so obstinate, his passion so desperate, that everyone may see with half an eye, that he is preparing to dwell forever where bliss and even hope, are everlasting strangers!

O my dear Brothers and Sisters, what shall I say to you? How shall I preach to you? You are filling up the measure of your iniquity, and preparing with all diligence to be fitting companions for the devils in Hell! It needs a tender heart, and an earnest voice, to address such as you are! Permit me to speak to you in the language of Scripture. Why will you die, O house of Israel, why will you hug the pleasures of sin--pleasures which you know must be followed by the torments of eternity? Why will you put from you the hope of life? Why will you reject the Savior? It will be an awful thing, you who are vessels of mirth, when you shall be filled with wrath! You who are now vessels of pleasure, and vessels of pride--it will be a dreadful thing when God shall fill you to the brim with misery, and you shall be overflowing with His anger! Oh Lord, we beseech You, undo the sinner's work! Great Potter, reverse the wheel, re-mold the clay, break in pieces the old vessel that is preparing to be a drinking cap for Satan! Melt it down and refashion it, and bring it forth again upon the wheel, and touch it with Your own hands, and make it yet a vessel for honor, fitted for the Master's use!

And now I have a more pleasing task of turning immediately to our text,

and considering the character of those who, on the other hand, are the "vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom he called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." There are three things we will look at this morning. First, the vessels. Secondly, the Potter at His work And then, the Potter's stamp which is set upon the vessels--the stamp of Divine calling, which marks them as being the vessels of mercy.

I. First, then, let us look upon the saints of God as here described, under the title of VESSELS OF MERCY.

1. And the first thing we observe here is that, as vessels of mercy it is distinctly said that they are made of the same lump as the vessels of wrath. The same piece of clay from which the vessel of wrath is fashioned may be used by God to also make a vessel of mercy. Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters! You who have hope of Heaven hereafter, and a foretaste of it even now--look back to the hole of the pit from where you were dug, to the miry clay from where you were drawn! There was nothing in you by nature better than that which is found in any other man! You did lie in the impure mass of fallen creatureship, and if God has made you a vessel of mercy, it was not because there was anything in you that could merit esteem! There was no fitness, no natural adaptation in you to become what you are. You are a miracle of His love and of His distinguishing Grace! Had He left you to yourself, you had been as base and vile as others in your life; you had been as despairing, and as Christless as others in your death; you would have been as surely damned in eternity as the man who has descended into the pit of Hell, red with the blood of many a murdered one! Remember, you were in the loins of Adam, in the loins which begat a Judas! You are a son of the same mother Eve, who conceived and brought into the world, Cain the murderer, and of Demas who forsook the Lord, and of Judas who

sold Him for 30 pieces of silver. You know, too, in your own experience, that your temper is as evil, your disposition as vile, and your tendency as hellish as that of any man who has perished upon the gallows! If there is a difference in you, the difference is of God's Grace, and not of nature. This very morning you have had in your own soul a proof that you are taken from the old block, and are but a shred from the leprous rag of fallen humanity!

My dear Hearers, have you learned this Truth of God in your souls? I know there are some who will not believe that you are depraved. You cannot be brought to think that youare as fallen as the worst of men; you set yourselves up with pride, pretending to believe that there is something in you better than is to be found in the criminal or the profligate. I give you but little hope that you are a child of God if you have never learned this Truth of God! I find that God's elect, here, are of the same lump as the chief of sinners, and if you are of a different lump, it argues that you are not one of the chosen people of God. All God's people must learn, as surely as ever Grace teaches them, that they are vile. Christians may differ in a thousand doctrines, but they never differ in this one point. We all believe, and we are all compelled to confess, that our nature is vile from its original--evil--only evil and that continually! If there is any good in any of us, we all acknowledge it is the work of Divine Grace, and not the fruit of creature strength, nor an emanation from our depraved hearts. I pray God that you may learn this lesson, and if you have learned it, let it not discourage you, but rather give you hope! As you look upon yourselves and say, "I see that I am of the old stock," lift up your eyes to the God of All Grace, and cry, "O Great Potter! Though I am of the old clay, yet fashion me by Your Grace, and make me a vessel of mercy prepared for glory."

2. Further, it appears both from the text and the context, that these vessels of mercy were as much as any other portion of the clay, entirely in the Potter's hands. Had the Potter willed to leave that mass of clay alone, and let it revolve upon the wheel untouched by His gracious hands, or surrendered to the tools of Satan and his craft--if, I say, the Great Potter had left you or me, who are vessels of mercy to ourselves, we should have been vessels of wrath most surely! Jehovah might have done this if He had willed to do so, and there would have been no power in us to fit ourselves for Heaven. Hell's thistles grow self-sown, but God's wheat needs a Husbandman. Vessels of mercy fit themselves for destruction, but God's Grace, alone, can prepare a soul for glory. There is no reason in the world why any man should be saved apart from the Sovereign and distinguishing Grace of God. If the Lord had permitted the whole human race to perish, He would have been infinitely just, and throughout eternity the angels would have hymned Him in songs of adoration. If He had chosen to spare a few of mankind, the sparing of but a few would have been an act of surprising mercy--and mercy and judgment would have constituted the two elements of the eternal song! Inasmuch however, as He has taken so much of the clay, and has been pleased to make innumerable vessels of mercy as the stars of Heaven, unto His name be all the Glory forever and ever! Take heed that when you think of the number of the redeemed, you do not mar the idea that God is still a Sovereign. Had He saved but one, you would have said it was an instance of absolute Sovereignty--though He has saved tens of thousands, the Sovereignty is just as absolute as it was before. Had the Lord left you to become all that your evil nature and Satan could have made you, you could not have murmured. If He had permitted you to go on in your drunkenness without sending the Gospel to you; if He had allowed you to reject that Gospel as you would have

done unless He had compelled you to receive it--you could not have impugned His Justice-- even though you might have murmured at it. You have been made what you are, not as the result of any compulsion of merit demanding a debt from the Lord, nor by any effort of your own--you are what you are as the effect of the Sovereign discriminating love of God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Now let me ask my hearers again, have you learned this Truth of God? Have you learned how entirely you lie in God's hands? Have you ever been brought, my Hearer, to believe that if saved, it must be His will that saves you, though if lost it is your will that damns you? Have you ever been stripped so naked, so thoroughly naked, that you have said, "I have no claim upon God. If He saves me, it must be mercy, pure mercy, unmingled mercy"? Oh, if you have never been brought here, I tremble for you! I pray the Lord to bring you to this spot, for it is the very threshold of the door of Divine Grace. And when a man is brought here, he is not far from the Kingdom of God! Be it so with each of us, that we may acknowledge the Sovereignty and then admire Grace in the Sovereignty.

3. But to proceed. The text speaks of God's chosen ones as being "vessels." Now as we all know, a vessel is nothing but a receiver. A vessel is not a fountain--it is not a creator of the water--but a container and holder of that which is poured into it. Such are the redeemed of God. They are not fountains by nature, out of whom there springs up anything that is good. They are simply receivers, and receivers only! At one time they are full of themselves, but God's Grace empties them--and then as empty vessels they are set in the way of God's goodness, God fills them to the brim with His loving kindness, and so are they proved to be the vessels of His mercy. Sinner! Remember all that God asks of you in order to your salvation is that you would

be a receiver and this He gives you--even the power to receive! You may receive from Him who gives all; He asks you not to do anything but to hold out your empty hand and take all you need. He does not ask you to come with your mouth full as one that is fat and filled with bread--but to open wide your empty mouth, and He will fill it with His salvation.

He does not bid you store your granaries and become rich--He bids you simply confess your poverty, and open the doors of your empty chambers, that He may pour you out a blessing such as you shall scarcely find room to receive! The elect of God, to repeat my text, are vessels and vessels, only! They may, as vessels, afterwards give out to others, but they can only give out what God has put in them. They may work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, but they cannot work it out unless God works in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure! They may run over with gratitude, but it is only because God has filled them with Grace--they may stream forth with holiness, it is only because the Lord keeps the supply overflowing. They are receivers and only receivers!

And now let me ask, have you ever learned this Truth, my Hearer? Have you come to live as a receiver at the hands of God? Have you stood at Mercy's gate as a ragged beggar crying for His bread? Have you ever been compelled to say--

"Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to Your Cross I cling"? In God's name I assure you, if you have never become a vessel of mercy, if you have never yet been willing to take from God instead of giving of your own doings to Him, if you are not willing to be a recipient of His gratuitous goodness, you are a total stranger to everything like the Gospel of Christ! The Romanist who brings his prayers, the formalist who brings his ceremonies, the hypocrite who brings his profession--all these men have mistaken the Gospel! The Gospel is a scheme not of

giving to God, but of taking from God. It is not of bringing something to the Eternal Jehovah, but it is taking from His fullness, drinking from His well, receiving from His storehouse. You have not yet begun to spell out salvation unless you have learned, first of all, that you can do nothingand be nothing, except God makes you something and enables you to do something in His cause.

4. But furthermore and lastly upon this first head, the children of God are called vessels, but they have this added by way of distinction--they are "vessels of mercy." In order that they may be vessels of mercy, it is certainly necessary that they should be sinful, and that they should be miserable. Pity may be given to the miserable, but mercymust be bestowed upon the sinful! For a judge to talk of mercy to those who never had offended, would be to insult them; and for the philanthropist to offer pity to the man who knows no sorrow, would be but to mock him! The only qualifications that a man can have for being a vessel of mercy, are the qualifications of being sinful and of being sorrowful--two qualifications which I doubt not, many of you now possess, although because you have them, you think that you never can be a child of God. O rejoice in this thought, that in order to be filled with Grace, the qualification is emptiness! In order to be clothed with righteousness, the indispensable qualification is nakedness! In order to be washed in Jesus' blood, all that is needed of you is that you should feel your need of that washing! The redeemed of God are not vessels of merit, but vessels of mercy! They are sinful men and women who have felt their sin, and have mourned over their iniquity, and have hence become sorrowful and miserable. Then it is that God shows to them that they are vessels of mercy. If I could wander through this hall and read each heart, I should find some, I doubt not, who have come here saying, "I am the chief of sinners; I

feel that if all the world were saved, there is no room for me, for there is not one good trait in my character. My sin is so aggravated; I have heard the Gospel so often and yet I have rejected it! Conscience has attired me so many times, and yet I would not listen to its admonitions. I am sure, I am certain that I am in the most hopeless plight, and I am fearfully miserable upon this account. Oh, that there were mercy to be had in Heaven, and that God would have pity upon such an one as I am!" Soul, there is comfort for you in this text! Have I not told you, and do you not believe it, that the vessel must be empty before it can be filled And you are empty! There is hope, then, that God will save you! The vessel must be black with sin before it can be washed with mercy. And you are black. There is hope, then, that you shall be cleansed. A vessel must be filled with misery before it can be filled with mercy--you are filled with misery and full of sorrow. Oh, be of good cheer! Bring this vessel of yours, full of misery though it is, and empty it all at the foot of the Cross, and I tell you, Sinner--my words are true--He will fill your vessel with the richest mercy that ever He gave to the brightest of His saints, or to the boldest of His Apostles!

What a glad and joyous hour it is, when God, for the first time, fills the vessel with His mercy! My soul cannot help going back to the hour in my own experience, when the first flood of mercy brimmed this poor empty vessel. Filled to bursting with wormwood and gall had that vessel been for many and many a day. Often had it seemed as if the vessel must be shivered with the workings of inward sorrow. At last the hour had come, Jehovah said, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." These eyes, by God's Grace, looked! This heart believed, and in a moment that vessel emptied of self. And emptied of misery, I was plunged into the sea of mercy and fully submerged! I thought I

should have a little hope at first, and then a stronger confidence, but no, my sun arose in the fullness of His strength! The stream came not by slow degrees, but in an instant was the vessel covered, swallowed up and lost in joy and love! The gladsomeness of that hour, I can remember, but I cannot tell. Then I knew my sins forgiven! I could dance for mirth! Then I knew my name was inscribed in the Lamb's fair Book of Life, and nothing that earth could have afforded could give a drop ofjoy that was comparable to the bliss of that hour! Oh, may it be so with some of you this morning! Men, Brothers and Sisters, Fathers, Mothers and Children--may it be so with you! Turn, I beseech you, your tearful eyes to Jesus hanging on the Cross, and it shall be so NOW! Come, bring your empty vessels, for the fountain flows! Break not your pitcher with despair, but come and fill it with the hands of faith.

There is room for you here at the marriage feast--you shivering beggar clothed with the rags of sin! Come, the voice of Mercy bids you. The arms of Jesus are outstretched to woo you! You are not rejected; Mercy's door is not shut--come and welcome! It is the 11th hour--the 12th hour, though it has struck on earth, has not struck in Heaven--there is time! Your noon-time of mercy is not passed! The hour of Divine Grace still lasts, and even now you may read your name as a vessel of mercy fully prepared unto eternal glory!

II. We have cast our eye upon the vessels, let us now pause a little while and see THE POTTER AT HIS WORK.

When a potter is about to make a vessel, you must not imagine that he takes up the mere clay and puts it on the wheel, and then leaves it to chance as to what shall be made of it. No, he has his plan. Before he sits down to the labor, he knows what kind of vessel he is about to make. So it is with our Divine Potter who is in Heaven. He takes the poor sinner as a mass of clay--He puts him on the wheel, and as that

wheel revolves, the Potter looks and sees in that clay a future something which does not appear to the vessel, but which only appears to the Great Workman's eyes. We may truly say of each of us who know the Lord, that, "it does not yet appear what we shall be." And what we shall be will never appear until we shall see Christ as He is, and be like He! The Potter, however, knows what we are to be. Our Father who is in Heaven will not be deceived at last as to what He will make of His people. He has a plan and that plan, I think, I may say to you in these few words--"He will present us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Sweet and blessed consideration! God intends to make of every sinner who believes on Him, a spotless, perfect vessel, full of glory! He does not intend to leave a single sin unpardoned, or to let a single evil principle remain in your soul. He means to tear up your iniquity by the roots, and make you totally free from the very being and indwelling of sin! He means to wash you so completely in the blood of Christ, that both the power and the guilt of sin shall all be taken away! And He means, as the completion of all, to make you in the image of Christ Jesus--as fair and lovely as that spotless and perfect Lamb of God! Oh, Christian, does not this rejoice your heart? You shall yet be like Christ! Oh, do you say, "I am as much like the devil, sometimes, as I can be, and I often have to mourn that there is so much of the old Adam in me"?

Yes, but rejoice. It does not yet appear what you shall be! Every mark of Satan shall yet be put away from you. Every tinge of the old depravity shall yet be cleansed. And when you shall be taken into Heaven as a vessel thoroughly finished, you will be a theme of wonder to all the angels and the glorified spirits who shall gather round about you to see the matchless skill and Grace of God as it is manifested in your character and in your nature! The Lord grant that we

may always have an eye to the great plan of the Potter, so that when sharp afflictions make us whirl upon the wheel, we may rejoice that the plan is being accomplished, and that we shall come forth perfect from the hands of the Maker.

And now while we are stopping here to notice the Potter at His work, having glanced at the plan, let us observe that like every potter, He first of all makes the outlines in the clay. You may have seen the man at work executing designs in glass. Perhaps at the very first moment, you may form a rough guess of what the whole thing is to be, though the ornament and elaboration which constitute the main part of the beauty you cannot yet discover. Certain it is, that the moment a man begins to be prepared for Heaven by the Grace of God in his soul, you may see the outlines of what he is to be, although it is but the bare outline.

Shall I tell you what those outlines are? There is first of all in him--faith in Christ. A simple, childlike trust in Him who hung upon the tree. There is next in him another mark of the Potter's hands--that is love to Christ--a love that is strong as death, though sometimes it seems to be feeble as a worm! There is also in him a hope that makes him not ashamed; and a joy which makes glad his countenance. It is but the bare outline, as I have said, for the glory which excels is not there. The vase is only in its embryo, but yet sufficiently developed to give a prophecy of its finished form; but as for the pictures that shall be inlaid, as for all the different colors that shall be spent upon it, you cannot guess as yet--nor could you--unless you could climb to the Potter's seat and see the plan upon which He looks as the clay revolves upon the wheel.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, have you anything in you as yet of the great outlines? Can you say in truth, "I do believe on the Lord Jesus"? Fear not then, my Hearer, you are a vessel of mercy! Not a finished vessel,

but one that shall be finished. Can you say--

"Oyes, I do love Jesus, Because He first loved me"?

If that is true, you are not yet what you shall be, but you are a vessel of mercy for all that! And does your hope sometimes tell you that through Jesus you shall stand among the glorified? Then be glad; The Potter has begun with you, and He will never leave you! He mars no vessel on the wheel, or if it is marred, He will remake it. He casts not away the clay which He has once taken in His hands; He will complete what He has begun; He knows no failures and no disappointments. You shall yet be all that He would have you be and, filled with glory, you shall glitter in Heaven at last!

But to proceed--as the Potter goes on with His work, you may perceive the gradual completion of the article which He manufactures. And so, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are vessels of mercy, there will not always be in you the bare outline, but as time goes on there will be some of the beautiful lines and firings He puts there! It is always a joy to me that such a large proportion of gray-headed Christians always attend here, and it is a theme of wonder, also, as well as ofjoy, because I can scarcely understand what they can learn from me. The Lord must have taught them so much more in these many years. He must have been engraving them, and using the tools of discernment upon them so long that they must be getting ready--they must be getting nearer to that glorious readiness which prepares the people of God for entrance into eternal life! I am not among those who think that a Christian is a thing that stands still. He is a vessel, but is a vessel on the wheel. He is clay, but he is clay in the Potter's hands gradually being formed. I should question whether there is any of the life of God in a man if that life does not germinate and grow--for life is a thing that will grow, and you cannot prevent it--you may seek to bind up the

branch of a tree or to restrain it, but if it cannot grow in one direction, it will in another. If it cannot swell in one place where you have bandaged it--although it will often burst the tightest bond you can put around it--if it cannot swell there, it will surely grow somewhere else! So is it with the life of God in the Christian--it will grow! The Christian will be getting more and more like his Master. You sometimes seem to think you are going backward--yet if you are the children of God, there is a constant going forward, after all. There may be occasional backslidings, but the tenor of your life will be progress. You may slip, yes, and fall--but still, "Onward," will be the true motto of your course. You will be progressing in the Divine Life, but I do not think, Brothers and Sisters, that you are a vessel of mercy, if after 20 or 30 years of union with Christ's Church there has been no growth in you. If you do not know more of your Lord's faithfulness; if you do not feel more of your own weakness and depravity; if your faith has not become more unstaggering, and more confident in Him who is faithful and true; if you have not more longings after Him, and more will to be spent in His cause, I should begin to question whether you are a vessel on the Master's wheel. I do not think He would lose 25 years over you--that He would let you be spinning round on the wheel of Providence all that while, and yet never have touched you--and never have made you more meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! In fact, it is just this growth of God's Grace that is one of the evidences of life, and though you may not be able at all times to discover it, yet it is there! If you are a vessel of mercy, you are getting nearer towards completion--nearer to the day when with everlasting songs you shall be presented before the Father's face.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if we can only see here on earth, vessels

getting ready for perfection, and if those vessels have so much beauty in them as the children of God really have, what must they be when at last they shall be finished? Jehovah, how glorious shall be Your workmanship in this, Your second Creation! If this world is fair, how much fairer shall the new world be--if in this, Your old Creation, You have made such beauties that the admiring angels may come down to view them, and the morning stars may find in them subjects for song--what shall Your new Creation be? If that rough work, which You did but speak from Your mouth, is so marvelously beautiful--what must be that work to accomplish which You have sat down to the potter's wheel? That work to perform which You have shed Your own blood, and to perfect which You have not spared the treasures of Heaven, but emptied them out that You might complete those vessels which shall be for Your glory? Oh, the songs! Oh, the hallelujahs that shall greet Jehovah's workmanship, when all shall be completed, when all the vessels shall be brought Home--when Heaven's tables shall be loaded with the richest of all ware, when souls shall be filled with the red wine of bliss and all the glorified shall rejoice in God! What songs, I say, what hallelujahs shall make the courts of Heaven echo and re-echo throughout eternity forever and ever!

III. And now I shall come to my last point, upon which I shall be somewhat brief, but I hope, thoroughly in earnest. The last point was THE POTTER'S MARK UPON HIS VESSELS.

In all manufacturing of costly wares, there is always some trademark peculiar to the firm that has manufactured the article--a mark which is not to be imitated--and without which no vessel is the genuine production of the professed maker. Brothers and Sisters, you may know today whether you are a vessel of mercy! You may know by the Master's mark upon you! That mark, the Apostle tells you, is calling. Have you

been called? If you are called, you are elected. Has Divine Grace called you out of darkness into the marvelous Light of God? If so, it is not a matter of question as to whether you are ordained to eternal life. You may rest assured that, without a doubt, your name was in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundations of the world--if you have in time been called from sin unto righteousness! Mark, then, the distinguishing mark of the Great Potter upon His vessels of mercy is effectual calling. And I would here remark that that is a mark which no man can put upon you! It is one which God alone can impress. We can call you, but we cannot call you effectually. The earnest minister may cry aloud, and spare not, and bid sinners come to the marriage supper of the Lamb--but it is in vain calling to deaf ears--and such are the ears of all men by nature! The Lord alone can so speak that the deaf, no, the dead, will hear! Have you ever, then, felt a calling which is not ofman, neither byman? Has the voice of Mercy ever spoken to your soul and said, "Come to Jesus"? And has it so spoken that your heart has said, "Your face, Lord, will I seek"?

Oh, my dear Hearers, you have been called time enough by me----so many times that if you perish, your blood must lie at your own door! God is witness that over the most of you, these eyes have wept many and many a time. The Lord knows how earnestly I have called to you, how I have pleaded with you as though it were my own soul that was at hazard--and as though I pleaded for my own life! If you have rejected these callings, be prepared to answer for it at the Last Great Day. But alas, these callings you may have, and they may only sink you lower than the lowest Hell! Have you ever received the Irresistible calling of the Holy Spirit? Has He said to you, "Mary," and have you said, "Rabboni"? Has He cried to you, "Zaccheus make haste and come down!" And have you come down and received Him into your house? None but a call from

Christ's own lips shall ever compel such stubborn hearts as ours to follow Him! Have you had that call? If so, you have the mark of the Potter upon you! You are not a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction, but a vessel of mercy prepared unto glory! I would further remark, that as this is a mark which no man can put upon you, so blessed be God, it is one which no man can take away from you! If God has called you, that calling is without repentance--God will not repent and take back the gift which He has given you. If He has called you by His Grace to repentance, He will call you to faith, and then from faith to love, from love to patience, and to hope and onwards till at last He whispers, "Come up here," and He calls you unto glory! I do not believe in that Gospel which teaches that a man may be effectually called, and yet may perish; that a heart may be thoroughly renewed, and yet may go back to its old state--that, in fact-- God's work may melt away like "the baseless fabric of a vision." I do not believe that His new Creation is but froth and foam--that it only lives by the will of a creature, and it dies if that creature has a will that it should do so! No, my Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord has put Heaven's light in you, once, it is there forever--and not death nor Hell can quench it--but in your soul it must and will burn! "Ah, but," says one, "if I indulge in sin." Yes, but you shall not indulge in sin--the Lord will preserve and keep you so that the Wicked One touches you not. "But if I go back and sin as I used to do." Yes, but you cannot do it. That Grace of God which has changed your nature will hold you to the end--you shall walk in the Light of God till you come to walk in Heaven! "Your path shall be as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day," and if you go back, we will say of you, "He went out from us because he was not of us, for if he had been of us, he doubtless would have continued with us." "The dog has returned to his vomit, because he

was a dog, and the sow that was washed has returned to her wallowing in the mire, because she was a sow." But had the natures been changed, they would never have returned to their old propensities! Had they been made new creatures in Christ Jesus, that new Creation could never have been undone! God's tapestry could not have been unraveled; His work could not have been consumed; it is eternal and must abide; it must last even to the perfection in Heaven. Be of good cheer then, if the Lord has put His mark upon you, the devil cannot wash it out!

And then, to conclude, let me remark, if you have had the seal of calling put upon you, that seal is sure and certain. There never was a man yet called out of darkness into the Light of God by mistake! There never was a man who repented, and then found he was not an elect one; never a man went to Christ, and then found he had not a right to come, and must go back. "Whoever comes unto Me I will in nowise cast out." God has never made mistakes in the callings of His Grace! The right man is called at the right time, and the right place; he goes to Christ and finds that what is a fact in time, was a purpose in all eternity!

Between calling and election there is an indissoluble union. If you have the link of calling in your hand, depend upon it that it is fastened--though you can not see it--unto the other golden link of Divine Decree!

You could not have come to Christ unless the Father had drawn you, and the Father would not have drawn you unless He had intended to draw you, and that intention is Election's decree. Be, then, quite certain that if you come, it was intended that you should come; and you were chosen of God from before the foundation of the world! But am I certain that I am regenerate? I cannot allow a dispute about whether I am elected or not. Am I sure that--

"My faith is fixed on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and

righteousness?"

I may be as sure of my election, as if I could climb to Heaven and turn over the red roll and read my name in letters of gold! The Lord has given you a test which never failed yet, and never will. You shall not meet, either in time or in eternity, a single penitent who found that he had repented and believed through error. Oh, no! The fruit proves the life of the tree and the fact that you have mercy, proves that God intended to give you the mercy. And what is that, but all that we mean by the Doctrine, that God has, from the beginning, chosen unto salvation those who believe in Christ Jesus?

And now, before I send you away, let me say one or two earnest words. It makes my heart glad to see what work the Lord is doing in our day everywhere. I do not think these are times over which God's people ought to sorrow. There is more doing in London, now, than has been accomplished for the last 20 years. The people of God are earnest in prayer. There are men raised up to preach in simple language the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, and I do hope that whatever good we have seen in the past, is about to be quite eclipsed and outdone by greater things that are on their way! But, my Brothers and Sisters, who can shut their eyes to the sad fact that in days of revival there are some who are unblessed? I am anxious about you, that while God is working on the right hand, and on the left, you should not escape without receiving the blessing from on high! Oh, to be like Gideon's fleece--dry when the floor is wet! To remain in a barren spot of ground when all the earth is filled with fertility! And yet, my dear Hearers, this is the case with some of you. You are still becoming more and more fitted for destruction! Oh, I would solemnly warn you that fitness fordestruction will certainly end in destruction! Sin and Hell are married unless Repentance proclaim the divorce! As you sow, you must

reap. It is of no use your looking into mysterious doctrines to find anything which can contradict this Truth of God. As your life is such must your endbe! And if your course is out of Christ, your end shall be out of Christ, and your eternal home shall be out of hope and far away from eternal happiness! But oh, I pray that instead thereof, the Lord, in His Infinite bounty may call you effectually by His Grace! I pray that the Holy Spirit may descend--but how shall we obtain that Holy Spirit? Only by the conjoined and united prayers of the Church of Christ! My dear Friends, let us pray more earnestly. Not only our own comfort, but the salvation of sinners lies in the hands of God. We cannot save them! We cannot awaken them! Let us cry--"Oh Lord! You take the work in hand/" and from this hour let every Christian in our midst resolve that he will give the Lord no rest until He sends down the showers of His Grace and revives His work in the midst of our Church, and throughout every land! Let me dismiss you with just a word of prayer to that effect.

Oh Lord, revive Your work, we pray! We are feeble and weak; we can do nothing. But come Yourself and achieve triumphs, and let victories be won. Come and break the hard heart, and subdue the stubborn will. Lord, save the unsaved! O God, awaken those here present who are dead in sin, and let the vessels of mercy whom in Your Sovereign good pleasure You have chosen out of the mass of mankind be filled with mercy till they overflow with gratitude and joy! Oh Lord, hear us and let the feeble effort of this morning be crowned with richer success than we can ask or even think, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

Chapter 41

True Prayer--True Power!

A Sermon

(No. 328)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 12th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive and ye shall have them."--Mark 11:24.

THIS VERSE has something to do with the faith of miracles; but I think it hath far more reference to the miracle of faith. We shall say at any rate, this morning, consider it in that light. I believe that this text is the inheritance not only of the apostles, but of all those who walked in the faith of the apostles, believing in the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ. The advice which Christ gave to the twelve and to his immediate followers, is repeated to us in God's Word this morning. May we have grace constantly to obey it. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

How many persons there are who complain that they do not enjoy prayer. They do not neglect it, for they dare not; but they would neglect it if they dared, so far are they from finding any pleasure therein. And have we not to lament that sometimes the chariot-wheels are taken off, and we drive right heavily when we are in supplication? We spend the time allotted, but we rise from our knees unrefreshed, like a man who has lain upon his bed but has not slept so as to really recover his strength. When the time comes round again conscience drives us to our knees, but there is not sweet fellowship with God. There is no telling out of our wants to him in the firm conviction that he will supply

them. After having gone again through a certain round of customary utterances, we rise from our knees perhaps more troubled in conscience and more distressed in mind than we were before. There are many Christians, I think, who have to complain of this--that they pray not so much because it is a blessed thing to allowed to draw near to God, as because they must pray, because it is their duty, because they feel that if they did not, they would lose one of the sure evidences of being Christians. Brethren, I do not condemn you; but at the same time, if I may be the means of lifting you up this morning from so low a state of grace into a higher and more healthy atmosphere, my soul shall be exceeding glad. If I can show you a more excellent way; if from this time forth you may come to look at prayer as your element, as one of the most delightful exercises of your life; if you shall come to esteem it more than your necessary food, and to value it as one of heaven's best luxuries, surely I shall have answered a great end, and you shall have to thank God for a great blessing.

Give me than your attention while I beg you, first, to look at the text; secondly to look about you; and the, to look above you.

I. First, LOOK AT THE TEXT. If you look at it carefully, I think you will perceive the essential qualities which are necessary to any great success and prevalence in prayer. According to our Saviour's description of prayer, there should always be some definite objects for which we should plead. He speaks of things--"what things soever ye desire." It seems then that he did not put it that God's children would go to him to pray when they have nothing to pray for. Another essential qualification of pray is earnest desire; for the Master supposes here that when we pray we have desires. Indeed it is not prayer, it may be something like prayer, the outward form or the bare skeleton, but it is not the living thing, the all-prevailing, almighty thing, called

prayer, unless there be a fulness and overflowing of desires. Observe, too, that faith is an essential quality of successful prayer--"believe that ye receive them." Ye cannot pray so as to be heard in heaven and answered to your soul's satisfaction, unless you believe that God really hears and will answer you. One other qualification appears here upon the very surface, namely, that a realizing expectation should always go with a firm faith--"believe that ye receive them." Not merely believe that "ye shall" but "ye do" receive them--count them as if they were received, reckon them as if you had them already, and act as if you had them--act as if you were sure you should have them--believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Let us review these four qualifications, one by one.

To make prayer of any value, there should be definite objects for which to plead. My brethren, we often ramble in our prayers after this, that, and the other, and we get nothing because in each we do not really desire anything. We chatter about many subjects, but the soul does not concentrate itself upon any one object. Do you not sometimes fall on your knees without thinking beforehand what you mean to ask God for? You do so as a matter of habit, without any motion of your heart. You are like a man who should go to a shop and not know what articles he would procure. He may perhaps make a happy purchase when he is there, but certainly it is not a wise plan to adopt. And so the Christian in prayer may afterwards attain to a real desire, and get his end, but how much better would he speed if having prepared his soul by consideration and self-examination, he came to God for an object at which he was about to aim with real request. Did we ask an audience at Her Majesty's court, we should be expected to reply to the question, "What do you wish to see her for?" We should not be expected to go into the presence of Royalty, and then to think of some petition after we came there.

Even so with the child of God. He should be able to answer the great question, "What is thy petition and what is thy request, and it shall be done unto thee?" Imagine an archer shooting with his bow, and not knowing where the mark is! Would he be likely to have success? Conceive a ship on a voyage of discovery, putting to sea without the captain having any idea of what he was looking for! Would you expect that he would come back heavily laden either with the discoveries of science, or with the treasures of gold? In everything else you have a plan. You do not go to work without knowing that there is something that you designed to make; how is it that you go to God without knowing what you design to have? If you had some object you would never find prayer to be dull and heavy work; I am persuaded that you would long for it. You would say, "I have something that I want. Oh that I could draw near my God, and ask him for it; I have a need, I want to have it satisfied, and I long till I can get alone, that I may pour out my heart before him, and ask him for this thing after which my soul so earnestly pants" You will find it more helpful to your prayers if you have some objects at which you aim, and I think also if you have some persons whom you will mention. Do not merely plead with God for sinners in general, but always mention some in particular. If you are a Sunday-school teacher, don't simply ask that you class may be blessed, but pray for your children definitely by name before the Most High. And if there be a mercy in your household that you crave, don't go in a round-about way, but be simple and direct in your pleadings with God. When you pray to him, tell him what you want. If you have not money enough, if you are in poverty, if you are in straits, state the case. Use no mock-modesty with God. Come at once to the point; speak honestly with him. He needs no beautiful periphrasis such as men will constantly use when they don't like to say right out what they mean. If you want either a

temporal or spiritual mercy, say so. Don't ransack the Bible to find out words in which to express it. Express your wants in the words which naturally suggest themselves to you. They will be the best words, depend upon it. Abraham's words were the best for Abraham, and yours will be the best for you. You need not study all the texts in Scripture, to pray just as Jacob and Elias did, using their expressions. If you do you will not imitate them. You may imitate them literally and servilely, but you lack the soul that suggested and animated their words. Pray in your own words. Speak plainly to God; ask at once for what you want. Name persons, name things, and make a straight aim at the object of your supplications, and I am sure you will soon find that the weariness and dullness of which you often complain in your intercessions, will no more fall upon you; or at least not so habitually as it has heretofore done.

"But," saith one, "I do not feel that I have any special objects for which to pray." Ah! My dear brother, I know not who you are, or where you live, to be without special objects for prayer, for I find that every day brings neither its need or its trouble, and that I have every day something to tell to my God. But if we had not a trouble, my dear brethren, if we had attained to such a height in grace that we had nothing to ask for, do we love Christ so much that we have no need to pray that we may love him more? Have we so much faith that we have ceased to cry, "Lord increase it?" You will always, I am sure, by little self-examination, soon discover that there is some legitimate object for which you may knock at Mercy's door and cry, "Give me, Lord, the desire of my heart." And if you have not any desire, you have but to ask the first tried Christian you meet, and he will tell you of one. "Oh," he will reply to you, "If you have nothing to ask for yourself, pray for me. Ask that a sick wife may be recovered. Pray that the Lord

will lift up the light of his countenance upon a desponding heart; ask that the Lord would send help to some minister who has been labouring in vain, and spending his strength for nought." When you have done for yourself, plead for others; and if you cannot meet with one who can suggest a theme, look on this huge, Sodom, this city like another Gomorrah lying before you; carry it constantly in your prayers before God and cry, "Oh that London may live before thee, that its sin may be stayed, that its righteousness may be exalted, that the God of the earth may get unto himself much people out of this city."

Equally necessary is it with the definite object for prayer that there should be an earnest desire for its attainment. "Cold prayers," says an old divine, "ask for a denial." When we ask the Lord coolly, and fervently, we do as it were, stop his hand, and restrain him from giving us the very blessing we pretend that we are seeking. When you have your object in your eye, your soul must become so possessed with the value of that object, with your own excessive need for it, with the danger which you will be in unless that object should be granted, that you will be compelled to plead for it as a man pleadeth for his life.

There was a beautiful illustration of true prayer addressed to man in the conduct of two noble ladies, whose husbands were condemned to die and were about to be executed, when they came before. king George and supplicated for their pardon. The king rudely and cruelly repulsed them. George the first! it was like his very nature. And when they pleaded yet again, and again, and again, they could not be gotten to rise from their knees; they had actually to be dragged out of court, for they would not retire until the king had smiled upon them, and told them that their husbands should live. Alas! they failed, but they were noble women for their perseverance in thus pleading for their husbands' lives. That is the way for us to pray to God. We must have such a

desire for the thing we want, that we will not rise until we have it--but in submission to his divine will, nevertheless. Feeling that the thing we ask for cannot be wrong, and that he himself hath promised it, we have resolved it must be given, and if not given, we will plead the promise, again, and again, till heaven's gates shall shake before our pleas shall cease. No wonder that God has not blessed us much of late, because we are not fervent in prayer as we should be. Oh, those cold-hearted prayers that die upon the lips--those frozen supplications; they do not move men's hearts, how should they move God's heart? they do not come from our own souls, they do not well up from the deep secret springs of our inmost heart, and therefore they cannot rise up to him who only hears the cry of the soul, before whom hypocrisy can weave no veil, or formality practice any disguise. We must be earnest, otherwise we have no right to hope that the Lord will hear our prayer.

And surely, my brethren, it were enough to restrain all lightness and constrain an unceasing earnestness, did we apprehend the greatness of the Being before whom we plead. Shall I come into thy presence, O my God, and mock thee with cold-hearted words? Do the angels veil their faces before thee, and shall I be content to prattle through a form with no soul and no heart? Ah, my brethren! we little know how many of our prayers are an abomination unto the Lord. It would be an abomination to you and to me to hear men ask us in the streets, as if they did not want what they asked for. But have we not done the same to God? Has not that which is heaven's greatest boon to man, become to us a dry dead duty? It was said of John Bradford that he had a peculiar art in prayer, and when asked for his secret he said, "When I know what I want I always stop on that prayer until I feel that I have pleaded it with God, and until God and I have had dealings with each other upon

it." I never go on to another petition till I have gone through the first." Alas! for some men who begin "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;" and before they have realized the adoring thought--"hallowed be thy name,"--they have begun to repeat the next words--"Thy kingdom come;" then perhaps something strikes their mind, "Do I really wish his kingdom to come? If it were to come now where should I be?" And while they are thinking of that, their voice is going on with, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" so they jumble up their prayers and run the sentences together. Oh! stop at each one till you have really prayed it. Do not try to put two arrows on the string at once, they will both miss. He that would load his gun with two charges cannot expect to be successful. Discharge one shot first, and then load again. Plead once with God and prevail, and then plead again. Get the first mercy, and then go again for the second. Do not be satisfied with running the colours of your prayers into one another, till there is no picture to look at but just a huge daub, a smear of colours badly laid on. Look at the Lord's Prayer itself. What clear sharp outlines there are in it. There are certain definite mercies, and they do not run into one another. There it stands, and as you look at the whole it is a magnificent picture; not confusion, but beautiful order. Be it so with your prayers. Stay on one till you have prevailed with that, and then go on to the next. With definite objects and with fervent desires mixed together, there is the dawning of hope that ye shall prevail with God.

But again: these two things would not avail if they were not mixed with a still more essential and divine quality, namely, a firm faith in God. Brethren, do you believe in prayer? I know you pray because you are God's people; but do you believe in the power of prayer? There are a great many Christians that do not, they think it is a good thing, and

they believe that sometimes it does wonders; but they do not think that prayer, real prayer, is always successful. They think that its effect depends upon many other things, but that it has not any essential quality or power in itself. Now, my own soul's conviction is, that prayer is the grandest power in the entire universe; that it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, attraction, gravitation, or any other of those secret forces which men have called by names, but which they do not understand. Prayer hath as palpable, as true, as sure, as invariable and influence over the entire universe as any of the laws of matter. When a man really prays, it is not a question whether God will hear him or not, he must hear him; not because there is any compulsion in the prayer, but there is a sweet and blessed compulsion in the promise. God has promised to hear prayer, and he will perform his promise. As he is the most high and true God, he cannot deny himself. Oh! to think of this; that you a puny man may stand here and speak to God, and through God may move all the worlds. Yet when your prayer is heard, creation will not be disturbed; though the grandest ends be answered, providence will not be disarranged for a single moment. Not a leaf will fall earlier from the tree, not a star will stay in its course, nor one drop of water trickle more slowly from its fount, all will go on the same, and yet your prayer will have effected everything. It will speak to the decrees and purposes of God, as they are being daily fulfilled; and they will all shout to your prayer, and cry, "Thou art our brother; we are decrees, and thou a prayer; but thou art thyself a decree, as old, as sure, as ancient as we are." Our prayers are God's decrees in another shape. The prayers of God's people are but God's promises breathed out of living hearts, and those promises are the decrees, only put into another form and fashion. Do not say, "How can my prayers affect the decrees?" They cannot, except in so much that

your prayers are decrees, and that as they come out, every prayer that is inspired of the Holy Ghost unto your soul is as omnipotent and as eternal as that decree which said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" or as that decree which chose his people, and ordained their redemption by the precious blood of Christ. Thou has power in prayer, and thou standest to-day among the most potent ministers in the universe that God has made. Thou has power over angels, they will fly at thy will. Thou hast power over fire, and water, and the elements of earth. Thou hast power to make thy voice heard beyond the stars; where the thunders die out in silence, thy voice shall wake the echoes of eternity. The ear of God himself shall listen and the hand of God himself shall yield to thy will. He bids thee cry, "Thy will be done," and thy will shall be done. When thou canst plead his promise then thy will is his will. Seems it not my dear friends, an awful thing to have such a power in one's hands as to be able to pray? You have heard sometimes of men who pretended to have a weird and mystic might, by which they could call up spirits from the vasty deep, by which they could make showers of rain, or stop the sun. It was all a figment of the fancy, but were it true the Christian is a greater magician still. If he has but faith in God, there is nothing impossible to him. He shall be delivered out of the deepest waters--he shall be rescued out of the sorest troubles--in famine he shall be fed--in pestilence he shall go unscathed--amidst calamity he shall walk firm and strong--in war he shall be ever shielded--and in the day of battle he shall lift up his head, if he can but believe the promise, and hold it up before God's eyes and plead it with the spell of unfaltering reliance. There is nothing, I repeat it, there is no force so tremendous, no energy so marvellous, as the energy with which God has endowed every man, who like Jacob can wrestle, like Israel can prevail with him in prayer. But

we must have faith in this; we must believe prayer to be what it is, or else it is not what it: should be. Unless I believe my prayer to be effectual it will not be, for on my faith will it to a great extent depend. God may give me the mercy even when I have not faith; that will be his own sovereign grace, but he has not promised to do it. But when I have faith and can plead the promise with earnest desire, it is no longer a probability as to whether I shall get the blessing, or whether my will shall be done. Unless the Eternal will swerve from his Word, unless the oath which he has given shall be revoked, and he himself shall cease to be what he is, "We know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

And now to mount one step higher, together with definite objects, fervent desires and strong faith in the efficacy of prayer there should be--and ()h may divine grace make it so with us!--there should be mingled a realising expectation. We should be able to count over the mercies before we have got them, believing that they are on the road. Reading the other day in a sweet little book, which I would commend to the attention of you all, written by an American author who seems to know the power of prayer thoroughly, and to whom I am indebted for many good things--a little book called The Still Hour, I met with a reference to a passage in the book of Daniel, the tenth chapter I think, where, as he says, the whole machinery of prayer seems to be laid bare. Daniel is on his knees in prayer, and Michael the archangel come to him. He talks with him and tells him that as soon as ever Daniel began to set his heart to understand, and to chasten himself before God, his words were heard, and the Lord had dispatched the angel. Then he tells him in the most business-like manner in the world, "I should have been here before, but the Prince of Persia withstood me; nevertheless the prince of thy nation helped me, and I am come to

comfort and instruct thee." See now. God breathes the desire into our hearts, and as soon as the desire is there, before we call he begins to answer. Before the words have got half way up to heaven, while they are yet trembling on the lip--knowing the words we mean to speak--he begins to answer them, sends the angel; the angel comes and brings down the needed blessing. Why the thing is a revelation if you could see it with your eyes. Some people think that spiritual things are dreams, and that we are talking fancies. Nay, I do believe there is as much reality in a Christian's prayer as in a lightning flash; and the utility and excellency of the prayer of a Christian may be just as sensibly known as the power of the lightning flash when it rends the tree, breaks off its branches, and splits it to the very root. Prayer is not a fancy of fiction; it is a real actual thing, coercing the universe, binding the laws of God themselves in fetters, and constraining the High and Holy One to listen to the will of his poor hut. favoured creature-man. But we want always to believe this. We need a realizing assurance in prayer. To count over the mercies before they are come! To be sure that they are coming! To act as if we had got them! When you have asked for your daily bread, no more to be disturbed with care, but to believe that God has heard you, and will give it to you. When you have taken the case of your sick child before God to believe that the child will recover, or if it should not, that it will be a greater blessing to you and more glory to God, and so to leave it to him. To be able to say, "I know he has heard me now; I will stand on my watch-tower; I will look for my God and hear what he will say to my soul." Were you ever disappointed yet, Christian, when you prayed in faith and expected the answer? I bear my own testimony here this morning, that I have never yet trusted him and found him fail me. I have trusted man and have been deceived, but my God has never once denied the request I have made to

him, when I have backed up the request with belief in his willingness to hear, and in the assurance of his promise.

But I hear some one say, "May we pray for temporals?" Ay, that you may. In everything make known your wants to God. It is not merely for spiritual, but for everyday concerns. Take your smallest trials before him. He is a God that heareth prayer; he is your household God as well as the God of the Sanctuary. Be ever taking all that you have before God. As one good man who is about to be united with this Church told me of his departed wife, "Oh," said he, "she was a woman that I could never get to do anything till she had made a matter of prayer of it. Be it what it might, she used to say, I must make it a matter of prayer;"'

Oh for more of this sweet habit of spreading everything before the Lord, just as Hezekiah did Rabshekah's letter, and there leaving it, saying, "Thy will be done, I resign it to thee!" Men say Mr. Muller of Bristol is enthusiastic, because he will gather seven hundred children and believe that God will provide for them; though there is nothing in the purse he is only doing what ought to be the commonplace action of every Christian man. He is acting upon a rule at which the worldling always must scoff, because he does not understand it; a system which must always appear to weak judgment of sense, not upon common sense, but upon something higher than common sense--upon uncommon faith. Oh that we had that uncommon faith to take God at his word! He cannot and he will not permit the man that trusteth him to he ashamed or confounded. I have thus now, as best I could, set forth before you what I conceive to be four essentials of prevailing prayer--"Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them."

II. Having thus asked you to look at the text, I want you now to LOOK ABOUT YOU. Look about you at our meetings for prayer, and look about

you at your private intercessions, and judge them both by the tenour of this text. First, look about you at the meetings for prayer; I cannot speak very pointedly in this matter, because I do honestly believe that the prayer-meetings which are usually held among us, have far less of the faults which I am about to indicate, that any others I have ever attended. But, still they have some of the faults, and I hope that what we shall say, will be taken personally home by every brother who is in the habit of engaging publicly in supplication at prayer-meetings. Is it not a fact, that as soon as you enter the meeting, you feel, the case of many praying men (to speak hardly perhaps, but I think honestly) lies in having a good memory to recollect a great many texts, which always have been quoted since the days of our grandfather's grandfather, and to be able to repeat them in good regular order. The gift lies also in some churches, especially in village churches, in having strong lungs, so as to be able to hold out, without taking breath for five and twenty minutes when you are brief, and three quarters of an hour when you are rather drawn out. The gift lies also in being able not to ask for anything in particular, but in passing through a range of everything, making the prayer, not an arrow with a point, but rather like a nondescript machine, that has no point whatever, and yet is meant to be all point, which is aimed at everything, and consequently strikes nothing. Those brethren are often the most frequently asked to pray, who have those peculiar, and perhaps, excellent gifts, although I certainly must say that l cannot obey the apostle's injunction in coveting very earnestly such gifts as these. Now, if instead thereof, some man is asked to pray, who has never prayed before in public; suppose he rises and says, "Oh Lord, I feel myself such a sinner that I can scarcely speak to thee, Lord, help me to pray! o Lord, save my poor soul! O that thou wouldst save my old

companions! Lord, bless our minister! be pleased to give us a revival. O Lord, 1 can say no more; hear me for Jesu's sake! Amen." Well, then, you feel somehow, as if you had begun to pray yourself. You feel an interest in that man, partly from fear lest he should stop, and also because you are sure that what he did say, he meant. And if another should get up after that, and pray in the same spirit, you go out and say, "This is real prayer." I would sooner have three minutes prayer like that, that thirty minutes of the other sort, because the one is praying, and the other is preaching. Allow me to quote what an old preacher said upon the subject of prayer, and give it to you as a little word of advice--"Remember, the Lord will not hear thee, because of the arithmetic of thy prayers; he does not count their numbers. He will not hear thee because of the rhetoric of thy prayers; he does not care for the eloquent language in which they are conveyed. He will not listen to thee because of the geometry of thy prayers; he does not compute them by their length, or by their breadth. He will not regard thee because of the music of thy prayers; he doth not care for sweet voices, nor for harmonious periods. Neither will he look at thee because of the logic of thy prayers; because they are well arranged, and excellently comparted. But he will hear thee, and he will measure the amount of the blessing he will give thee, according to the divinity of thy prayers. If thou canst plead the person of Christ, and if the Holy Ghost inspire thee with zeal and earnestness, the blessings which thou shalt ask, shall surely come unto thee." Brethren, I would like to burn the whole stock of old prayers that we have been using this fifty years. That "oil that goes from vessel to vessel,"--that "horse that rushes into the battle,"--that misquoted mangled text, "where two or three are met together, thou wilt be in the midst of them," and that to bless them,"--and all those other quotations which we have been

manufacturing, and dislocating, and copying from man to man. I would we came to speak to God, just out of our own hearts. It would be a grand thing for our prayer meetings; they would be better attended; and I am sure they would be more fruitful, if every man would shake off that habit of formality, and talk to God as a child talks to his father; ask him for what we want and then sit down and have done. I say this with all Christian earnestness. Often, because I have not chosen to pray in any conventional form, people have said, "That man is not reverent!" My dear sir, you are not a judge of my reverence. To my own master, I stand or fall. I do not think that Job quoted anybody. I do not think that Jacob quoted the old saint in heaven,--his father Abraham. I do not find Jesus Christ quoted Scripture in prayer. They did not pray in other people's words, but they prayed in their own. God does not want you to go gathering up those excellent but very musty spices of the old sanctuary. He wants the new oil just distilled from the fresh olive of your own soul. He wants spices and frankincense, not of the old chests where they have been lying until they have lost their savour, but he wants fresh incense, and fresh myrrh, brought from the ophir of your own soul's experience. Look well to it that you really pray, do not learn the language of prayer, but seek the spirit of prayer, and God Almighty bless you, and make you more mighty in your supplications. I have said, "Look about you." I want you to continue the work, and look about at your own closets. Oh, Brethren and sisters, there is no place that some of us need to be so much ashamed to look at as our closet door. I cannot say the hinges are rusty; they do open and shut at their appointed seasons. I cannot say that the door is locked and cobwebbed. We do not neglect prayer itself; but those walls, those beams out of the wall, what a tale might they tell! "Oh!" the wall mighty cry out, "I have heard thee when thou hast been in so vast a

hurry that thou couldst scarcely spend two minutes with thy God, and I have heard thee, too, when thou wast neither asleep nor awake, and when thou didst not know what thou wast saying." Then one beam might cry out, "I have heard thee come and spend ten minutes and not ask for anything, at least thy heart did not ask. The lips moved, but the heart did not ask. The lips moved, but the heart was silent." How might another beam cry out--"Oh! I have heard thee groan out thy soul, but I have seen thee go away distrustful, not believing thy prayer was heard, quoting the promise, but not thinking God would fulfil it." Surely the four walls of the closet might come together and fall down upon us in their anger, because we have so often insulted God with our unbelief and with our hurry, and with all manner of sins. We have insulted him even at his mercy seat, on the spot where his condescension is most fully manifested. Is it not so with you? Must we not each confess it in our turn? See to it then, Christian brethren, that an amendment be made, and God make you more mighty and more successful in your prayers that heretofore.

III. But not to detain you, the last point is look upward, LOOK ABOVE. Look above. Christian brethren and sisters, and let us weep. Oh God, thou hast given us a mighty weapon, and we have permitted it to rust. Thou hast given us that which is mighty as thyself, and we have let that power lie dormant. Would it not be a vile crime if a man had an eye given him which he would not open, or a hand that he would not lift up, or a foot that grew stiff because he would not use it. And what must we say of ourselves when God has given us power in prayer, and yet that power lies still. Oh, if the universe was as still as we are, where should we be? Oh God, thou givest light to the sun and he shines with it. Thou givest light even to the stars and they twinkle. To the winds thou givest force and they blow. And to the air thou givest life

and it moves, and men breathe thereof. But to thy people thou hast given a gift that is better than force, and life, and light, and yet they permit it to lie still. Forgetful almost that they wield the power, seldom exercising it, though it would be blessed to countless myriads. Weep, Christian man. Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, saw that on the coins of the other Emperors, their images were in an erect posture--triumphing. Instead thereof he ordered that his image should be struck kneeling, for said he--"That is the way in which I have triumphed." We shall never triumph till our image is struck kneeling. The reason why we have been defeated, and why our banners trail in the dust, is because we have not prayed. Go--go ye back to your God, with sorrow, confess before him, ye children of Ephraim, that ye were armed, and carried bows, but turned your backs in the day of battle. Go to your God and tell him that if souls are not saved, it is not because he has not power to save, but because you have never travailed as it were in birth for perishing sinners. Your bowels have not sounded like a harp for Kir-haresh, neither has your spirit been moved, because of the defenses of the tribe of Reuben. Wake up, wake up, ye people of Israel; be astonished, ye careless ones; ye who have neglected prayer; ye sinners that are in Zion's own self, and that have been at ease. Wake up yourselves; wrestle and strive with your God, and then the blessing shall come--the early and the latter rain of his mercy, and the earth shall bring forth plenteously, and all the nations shall call him blessed. Look up then, and weep.

Once more look up and rejoice. Though you have sinned against him he loves you still. Ye have not prayed unto him nor sought his face, but behold he cries to you still--"Seek ye my face;" and he saith not "Seek ye me in vain." Ye may not have gone to the fountain, but it flows as freely as before. Ye have not drawn near to God, but he waiteth to be

gracious still, and is ready to hear all your petitions. Behold, he says unto you, "Enquire of me concerning things to come, and concerning my sons and daughters, command ye me." What a blessed thing it is that the master in heaven is always ready to hear! Augustine has a very beautiful thought upon the parable of the man who knocked at his friend's door at midnight, saying, "Friend, give me three loaves." His paraphrase of it runs something like this--I knock at mercy's door, and it is the dead of night. "Will not some of the servants of the louse come and answer me?" No; I knock, but they are asleep. Oh! ye apostles of God--ye glorified martyrs--ye are asleep; ye rest in your beds; ye cannot hear my prayer. But will not the children answer? Are there not children who are ready to come and open the door to their brother? No; they are asleep. My brethren that have departed--with whom I took sweet counsel, and who were the companions of my heart--ye cannot answer me for ye rest in Jesus; your works do follow you, but you cannot work for me. But while the servants are asleep, and while the children cannot answer, the Master is awake,--awake at midnight too. It may be midnight with my soul, but he hears me, and when I am saying "Give me three loaves," he comes to the door and giveth me as much as I need. Christian, look up then and rejoice. There is always an open ear if you have an open mouth. There is always already hand if you have a ready heart. You have but to cry and the Lord hears; nay, before you call he will answer, and while you are speaking he will hear. Oh! be not backward then in prayer. Go to him when you reach your home; nay, on the very way lift up you ears silently; and whatever your petition or request may be, ask it in Jesu's name, and it shall be done unto you. Yet, again, look up dear Christian brethren, and amend your prayers from this time forth. Look on prayer no loner as a romantic fiction or as an arduous duty; look at it as a real power, as a real pleasure.

When philosophers discover some latent power, they seem to have a delight to put it in action. I believe there have been many great engineers, who have designed and constructed some of the most wonderful of human works, not because they would be renumerative, but simply from a love of showing their own power to accomplish wonders. To show the world what skill could do and what man could accomplish, they have tempted companies into speculations that could never remunerate apparently, so far as I could see, in order that they might have an opportunity of displaying their genius. O Christian men, and shall a great Engineer attempt great works and display his power, and will you who have a mightier power that ever was wielded by any man apart from his God--will you let that be still? Nay think of some great object, strain the sinews of your supplications for it. Let every vein of your heart be full to the brim with the rich blood of desire, and struggle, and wrestle, and tug and strive with God for it, using the promises and pleading the attributes, and see if God does not give you your heart's desire. I challenge you this day to exceed in prayer my Master's bounty. 1 throw down the gauntlet to you. Believe him to be more than he is; open your mouth so wide that he cannot fill it; go to him now for more faith than the promise warrants; venture it, risk it, outdo the Eternal if it be possible; attempt it. Or as I would rather put it thus, take your petitions and wants and see if he does not honor you. Try whether if you believe him he doth not fulfill the promise, and richly bless you with the anointing oil of his Spirit by which you will be strong in prayer.

I cannot refrain from adding just these few syllables as you go away. I know there are some of you that never prayed in your lives. You have said a form of prayer, perhaps, many years, but have never prayed once. Ah! poor soul, you must be born again, and until you are born again you

cannot pray as I have been directing the Christian to pray. But let me say this much to you. Does your heart long after salvation? Has the Spirit whispered, "Come to Jesus, sinner, he will hear you?" Believe that whisper, for he will hear you. The prayer of the awakened sinner is acceptable to God. He heareth the broken in heart and healeth them too. Take your groanings and your sighs to God and he will answer you. "Ah," but says one, "I have nothing to plead." Well, but plead as David did--"Pardon my iniquity, for it is great." You have that plea--say, for his dear sake who shed his blood," and you shall prevail, sinner. But do not go to God, and ask for mercy with thy sin in thy hand. What would you think of the rebel, who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt, and with the declaration, of his rebellion on his breast? Would he deserve to he pardoned? He could not deserve it in any case, and surely he would deserve double his doom for having thus mocked his master while he pretended to be seeking mercy. If a wife had forsaken her husband do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask pardon for leaning on the arm of her paramour? No, she could not have such impudence, and yet it is so with you--perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin--praying to be reconciled to God, and yet harbouring and indulging your lust. Awake! awake! and call upon thy God, thou sleeper. The boat is nearing the rock, perhaps to-morrow it may strike and be shivered, and thou be cast into the unfathomable depths of everlasting woe. Call on thy God, I say, and when thou callest upon him, cast away thy sin or he cannot hear thee. If thou lift up thy unholy hands with a lie in they right hand, a prayer is worthless on they lip. Oh, come unto him, say unto him, "Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, love us freely," and he will hear you, and you shall yet pray as prevailing princes, and

one day shall stand as more than conquerors before the starry throne of him who ever reigns God over all, blessed for evermore.

Chapter 42

Christ's First and Last Subject

A Sermon

(No. 329)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, August 19th, 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 shall begin 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 Saviour, or even care to know whether there is a Saviour 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 as binding, 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 key-note 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 key-note, 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 Ghost breathe into all our spirits, and may we now repent before him, and now find those blessings which he hath 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 hath 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 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 thou shalt live; break my command, and thou shalt 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, but it offers no way of escape, no door by which the man may be restored to favour. 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 lightnings and its thunders have frightened away the angel of Mercy once 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, but there is no pause between where Mercy with her silver voice may step in

and say, "But if ye break this law, God will have mercy upon you, and will shew himself gracious if ye 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 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 ye and divide the earth, and pierce its bowels 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 power divine. 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 digged 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 thou shalt 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 new-create 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 finger must come the touch that shall dissolve the rock; and from his eye must dart the flash of love and light that can scatter the darkness of your impenitence. Remember, then, at the outset, that 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 Saviour's heard 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 give them to

us and then give 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, and 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 eye of the understanding, and the man becomes guilty in his own sight, as he always was guilty in the sight of God. Crimes long forgotten start up from the grave where his forgetfulness had buried them; sins, which he thought were no sins, suddenly rise up on their true character, and 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 jewelled belt upon his arm. I would then in the picture touch his eyes and bid you 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 thee 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 abhorreth, are cast away, and the eye, instead thereof, becomes a channel of tears--its floods are perpetual, it mourneth, it weepeth, and the soul crieth 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 hath 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, thou hast never repented unless that rope has been about thy neck after a spiritual fashion, if thou hast not felt that hell is thy just desert, and that if God banish thee for ever from himself, to the place where hope and peace can never come, he has only done with thee what thou hast richly earned. If thou hast not felt that the flames of hell are the ripe harvest which thy sins have sown, thou hast never yet 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 thy face, sinner, down on thy face; put away thine ornaments from thee, that he may know what to do with thee. No more anoint thine head and wash thy face, but fast and bow thy head and mourn. Thou hast made heaven mourn, thou hast made earth sad, thou hast digged hell for thyself. Confess thine iniquity with shame, and with confusion of face; bow down before the God of mercy and acknowledge that if he spare thee it will be his free mercy that shall do it; but if he destroy thee, thou shalt 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, ye 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 boon companions, to hate the bed of pleasure and all its glittering tapestries, yea, 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 cometh to thee delicately, like Agag, saying, "Surely the bitterness of death is past," if thou hast true repentance it will rise like Samuel and hew thy Agag in pieces before the Lord. As long as thou harbourest one idol in thy heart, God will never dwell there. Thou must break not only the images of wood and of stone, but of silver and of gold; yea, the golden calf itself, which has been thy chief idolatry, must be ground in powder and mingled in the bitter water of penitence, and thou must be made to drink thereof. 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; but 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 thou dost not so hate thy sins as to be ready to give them all up--if thou art not willing now to hang them on Haman's gallows a hundred and twenty cubits high--if thou canst not shake them off from thee as Paul did the viper from his hand, and shake it into the fire with detestation, then, I say, thou knowest not the grace of God in truth; for if thou lovest sin thou lovest neither God nor thyself, but thou choosest thine own damnation. Thou art in friendship with death and in league with hell; God deliver thee from this wretched state of heart, and bring thee to detest thy sin.

There lacks one more ingredient yet. 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, thou who wast once a drunkard, that thou hast turned to God while yet the cup is dear to thee, and thou canst still wallow in it by excess. Come not to me and say I have repented, thou avaricious wretch, whilst thou art yet grinding thine almost cent, per cent, out of some helpless tradesman whom thou hast taken like a spider in thy net. Come not to me and say thou are forgiven, when thou still

harboureth revenge and malice against thy brother, and speaketh against thine own mother's son. Thou liest to thine own confusion. Thy face is as the whore's forehead that is brazen, if thou darest to say "I have repented," when thine arms are up to the elbow in the filth of thine iniquity. Nay, man, God will not forgive your lusts while you are still revelling 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? Think you that God shall forgive your daily transgressions when you repeat them again, and again, and again, wilfully plunging into the mire? He will wash thee, man, but he will not wash thee for the sake of permitting thee to plunge in again and defile thyself 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 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 wrought 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," say you, "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 for ever." "But," says Old Self, "you used to drink very well." "Yes, I know it. I know thou didst, indeed, Old Self. Thou couldst sing a song as merrily as any one. Thou wast ringleader in all sorts of vice, but I am no relation of thine now. Thou art of the old Adam, and I of the new Adam. Thou art of thine 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 who will try his hand at it over and over again every day you live, and who 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 everyman 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 hath 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 Saviour'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 be none, then there will be no repentance, but if there be 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. Hast thou, then, faith in Jesus? Does thy soul look up and trust thyself in his hands? If so, then hast thou the repentance that needeth 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, for 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 open breastedness. 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, hath groanings which cannot be uttered--confession is the voice which expresses the groans. Now then, hast thou made confession of thy sin--not to man, but to God? If thou hast, then believe that thy repentance cometh from him, and it is a godly sorrow that needeth 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 cometh 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 thou wouldst shake the thirst of thy soul, repentance must be the cup out of which thou shalt drink, and then sweet peace shall be the blessed effect. Sin is such a troublesome companion that it will always give thee the heartache till thou hast turned it out by repentance, and then thy 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 hath 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. Sweet peace repentance ever yields to the man who is the possessor of it. And now what sayest thou my hearer--to put each point personally to thee--hast thou had peace with God? If not, never rest till thou hast had it, and never believe thyself to be saved till thou feelest thyself to be reconciled. Be not content with the mere profession of the head, but ask that the peace of God which passeth 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"! Nay, say I, it is sweet. At least, it is bitter

when it is alone, like the waters of Marah; but there is a tree called the cross, which if thou canst put into it, it will be sweet, and thou wilt 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 firstborn, 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; at least, if not heaven, it is so next door to it, that standing on the wet threshold I may see within the pearly portals, and sing the song of the

angels who rejoice within. Repentance, then, has this excellency, that 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, thou wilt not despise." When St. Augustine lay a-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, thou wilt not despise." When you despise yourselves, God honours you; but as long as you honour 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 odours sweet 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 thou wouldest 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 nigh;
Pardon and hope his love imparts,
When men in deep contrition lie.
He tells 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, some, but very few, of the excellencies of repentance. And now, my dear hearers, have you repented of Sin? Oh, impenitent soul, if thou dost not weep now, thou wilt have to weep for ever. The heart that is not broken now, must be broken for ever upon the wheel of divine vengeance. Thou must now repent, or else for ever smart for it. Turn or burn--it is the Bible's only alternative. If thou repentest, the gate of mercy stands wide open. Only the Spirit of God bring thee on thy knees in self-abasement, for Christ's cross stands before thee, and he who bled upon it bids thee look at him. Oh, sinner, obey the divine bidding. But, if your heart be 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 thou wilt 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 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, "Twas 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--ay, at this very hour. So be it, O Lord, and thine shall be the glory, world without end.

Chapter 43

Reigning Grace

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, AUGUST 26, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"So that as sin has reigned in death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:21.

I shall not pretend to enter into the fullness of this text, but merely select that topic, "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Our Apostle represents man as being subject to two great kings. Sin is the grim tyrant, to whom, in the first place, man has bowed his willing neck. The reign of sin is a reign of terror and delusion; it promises pleasure, but being full of all manner of deceivableness, of unrighteousness, it gives pain even in this world--and in the world to come--eternal death! An awful contemplation is that of the reign of sin. Permitted to come into this world as an usurper--having mounted its throne upon the heart of man by flattering blandishments, and crafty pleasantries, it was not long before it fully developed itself.

Its first act was to smite Eden with blast and mildew by its breath; its next act was to slay the second child of man, and that by the hand of the eldest-born. Since then, its reign has been scarlet with blood, black with iniquity, and fraught with everything that can make the heart of man sad and wretched! Oh Sin, you tyrant monster, all the demons that ever sat upon the throne of Rome were never such as you are! And all the men, who, from the wild north, have come forth as the scourges of man, the destroying angels of our race, though they have waded up to their knees in the blood of mortals, have never been so terrible as you are! You have reigned in death and that an eternal

death--a death from which there shall be no resurrection--a death which casts souls into an eternal grave--a grave of fire!

Our Apostle now changes the subject, and represents man under the gracious state, as rejoicing in another government, ruled by another king. Just as sin has reigned, and with despotic and irresistible power has ground his subjects in the very dust, and then cast them into the flames, so does Divine Grace with irresistible goodness, compel the chosen multitude to yield obedience, and thus prepares them for eternal bliss. Look, it lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, and makes him to sit among princes! Mark its shining course, and behold it blessing the sons of man wherever it stretches out its silver scepter, chasing away the misery of night, and giving the gladsomeness of Gospel day; sending back the fiends of discord and of cruelty, to the dens from which they once escaped. See its bidding the angels of mercy keep perpetual watch and ward over the sons of Adam who have given themselves up to its sway of the Kingdom of Grace!

My business this morning is not with sin, but with Grace--a pleasing and a glowing theme. May God fill souls, and touch our tongue, that we may speak of those things which we have made touching the King, and may God greatly bless what shall be said to each of our hearts!

I shall invite you, first of all, to see Grace in its reigning acts, and then I shall bid you come with joy and wonder, and behold Grace as it sits upon its throne.

I. First, then, I shall need your attention to a series of pictures, in which you shall see Grace manifesting its REIGNING POWER and reigning, too, in places the most unlikely ever to have yielded to its power.

Come with me then, Brothers and Sisters, and I will take you in spirit to the Valley of Vision. See, strewn there among the rugged rocks, the bleached and dried bones of the house of Israel--a skull there, and the

arm which once was allied to it, scattered so far apart that human wisdom could not bring them bone to bone, much less could human strength clothe the bones with flesh. Death reigns there--that irresistible all-subduing power, before whom monarchs and all their armies, though they be numberless as the host of Xerxes, must bow themselves. O, Death, we come this day to see you defeated, to see you cast from your throne! But who shall do it? Come forth, you ministers of Christ, and see what you can do. Here are souls spiritually dead--no, dry--as far away from hope as the bones of the morgue are from life! Come, you ministers, attune your eloquence and see what you can do! Behold, Chrysostom speaks, the golden-mouthed John showers forth his marvelous sentences, but the bones stir not. And now Whitefield speaks with seraph voice as though he would move Heaven and earth, but there is not a motion among those crisp particles that once might have lived, but which live no more. Come, Isaiah, and let us hear your thundering appeals, or you, Jeremy, cannot your tears bedew these bones with the circulating drops of life? Come, Ezekiel, with your eagle eyes, and with your soaring wing, or you, Daniel, with your fiery words piercing through the thick clouds of the future and exposing, as with lightning fire, the glory that is to come! I hear them speak, and Seer follows Seer in noble emulation of earnest utterance, but the dry bones move not! They are locked in the fell embrace of death, and life comes not to them even by these living words. Alas, eloquence, and human might and wisdom, and rhetoric and logic--yes, and zeal and earnestness, and God-given passion--cannot wake the soul of the spiritually dead! Though all the men whom God has chosen to be His representatives from the beginning of the reign of Grace even to the end thereof--though all should strive and persuade, and plead with eloquence that might move a rock, yet souls dead in trespasses and sin

could not and would not live by power so weak as this!

Come, you Apostles and confessors, Paul, and Peter, and John, and all the holy brotherhood of Inspired ambassadors! Come, I say, and spend your strength in vain, for apart from Divine Grace, you cannot charm the dull cold ear of death, or stir the torpor of a spirit dead in sins! And now Moses, you who did smite the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all her strength--come you forth and lift up the fiery tablets of stone, and bid these men live by the works of the Law. But no, he declines the futile task; he knows that he is of no power to deal with souls that are dead! But hearken, the Divine Voice exclaims with trumpet voice, "Almighty Grace, arise and quicken these dead souls," and behold, Grace stands before you, in angel form--no, better, in the form of Man, or rather Incarnate God--and I hear Him say, "Thus says the Lord, You dry bones live!" Listen to the rustling as every bone hastens to its fellow! Look how the skeleton starts upright, and how the flesh grows on the frame! "Come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" It is done, and in the place of a morgue, you see an army, and what once seemed to be the rubbish and sweepings of a tomb, now stands before you a great host as the host of God, a host of men full of life and who shall soon be clothed with glory! "Grace reigns unto eternal life."

Ah, do you understand this parable? Has this act ever been performed in you? Oh, there are some of you over whom a mother wept, and for whom a father prayed; and many a time have these eyes wept for you, too! I have longed for your soul's salvation, and sought out goodly words which might move your heart. But you were like the deaf adder, you would not hear nor be charmed--charm we ever so wisely. Ah, but glory be to God, you heard at last! How was it? How was it, I say? Speak! Speak, you who have been brought out from spiritual death, how was it

accomplished? By the might of the creature? By the power of the Law? By the energy of Nature? "No," unanimously you cry, "Grace has done it! God's Grace has reigned in us unto eternal life."

Rest awhile now, and come with me and behold another scene. The man is alive; he has been quickened--but no sooner is he quickened than he feels the terrible bondage of sin! See him yonder? I see him now in vision before my very eyes. He is a man who has been a drunkard, a swearer, and all else that is vile. All manner of sins has he committed, but now he feels that this mode of life will surely end in eternal death, and he, therefore, longs to escape. But see how he is bound with a hundred chains and held in bondage by seven fierce and strong devils! See him yonder? The hot sweat is on his brow while he strives to free his right arm of one huge bloated devil, called drunkenness, who seeks to hold him down and rivet the fetters about his wrist. Look how he struggles with foot and hand, for he is a prisoner everywhere, like Laocoon of old, whom the serpents enfolded from head to foot, although he strove to tear away those awful folds, and to escape the jaws which stained his holy fillets with their venom! Shall that man ever be delivered? Can that slave of lust snap fetters so strong, which have for years been about him till they have grown into his very flesh and become part of his nature? Shall those lips be freed from the propensity to swear? Can that heart be delivered from pride? Shall that foot be so turned from all its paths that it shall hate the road of wickedness? And shall those eyes no longer be filled with lust and crime, but shall they flash with purity and joy? Come here, Sirs, you who are wise; you who understand how to reform mankind--come and ply your arts upon him and see what you can do! The man sincerely longs to be delivered, but when he thinks he has pulled off one coil of the old serpent, lo--like a huge constrictor, it has folded itself again!

He goes back again, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. There seems for him no deliverance. His nature still is vile, and though he longs to be free, yet that nature has the mastery over him. Oh, some of you know what this means! You know how you took the pledge, perhaps a dozen times, but you broke it as often. You know how you promised yourself you would never curse God again, but in a moment of passion you were overpowered, and again the oath came trembling from your tongue! All these things--all your resolutions and your vows were powerless! They could not deliver you; they could not set you free.

But Divine Grace--come here and see what you can do! Grace speaks the word and says, "Get you hence, Satan-- away, you fiends--let the man be free!" And free he is, no more to be a slave! Now he hates the things which once he loved; now he abhors the vices in which he once indulged. Now to be holy is not hard for him--it would be far harder to make him live in sin as once he did! His nature is changed! Grace has so entirely created new the man, that he is a new creature in Christ Jesus, and he runs with delight and joy in all the paths of holiness. Grace has done it. Grace reigns unto eternal life!

But now come with me to another scene. There in the prison of conviction, bound in affliction and iron--there sits a miserable wretch. The walls of his dungeon are of solid granite, and the door is of brass, with many bolts most fast and firm. The captive sits both day and night with tangled hair, weeping, weeping, weeping! Ask him why, and his answer is, "I have sinned--I have sinned and I cannot look up. Beneath me there is the yawning gulf of death, and deeper still a devouring Hell! Above me there is an angry God and a judgment seat blazing with vengeance; within me there is an accusing conscience, the foretaste of the wrath to come!" "But is there not hope for you?" "No," he says, "none. I am righteously bound, and it is only long-suffering

mercy which spares me yet a little while, for if I had my due deserts, I would be taken out to execution and that at once." Oh, come here, you sons of mirth, and see what you can do for this poor prisoner. Can your music and your dancing open yonder gates, or shake those granite walls? Come here, you who are masters of the art of consolation, see what you can do! But as one who sings songs to a sad heart, and as vinegar upon niter, so are you. In vain even the minister, himself, who knowing the blessings of the Gospel, sets before that man the Grace of Christ, and the riches of His love! All that the minister can say, though sent of God, seems but to plunge him deeper in the mire! "Ah," groans the mourner, "Christ is merciful, but I have no part in Him. Yes, I know He is able to save the chief of sinners, but not such an one as I am. My heart is too hard, too vile." He puts from him the way of salvation, and goes back to his cold stony state, weeping, weeping, weeping, both by night and day! Grace, come and see if You can reign even here. I see Him come, and bearing in His hand the Cross, He speaks to the prisoner and cries, "Look here, look here," and oh, let us wonder to tell it, when the prisoner lifts his eyes, he sees a Savior bleeding on the tree, and in a momenta smile takes the place of his sorrow! He receives the oil ofjoy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. "Rise, rise," says Grace, "you are free, you are free! Shake yourself from the dust; pluck off your sackcloth, and put on your beautiful garments. Lo," He says, "see what I have done." And He breaks the gates of brass, and cuts the bars of iron in pieces. As the walls of Jericho fell down before the blast of the trumpet, so fall the walls of the dungeon, and the man finds himself rejoicing and glad and free--an heir of Heaven, a child of God, his feet are set upon the Rock and his goings are established! Oh, Grace Divine, what have You done? You are indeed triumphant, O reigning Grace, where despair itself had

triumphed!

Thus have I painted you three pictures. O that I had the hands of those mighty masters who could depict these things until they stood out visibly before your eyes! I shall need your patience this morning--I know I shall have your attention as I take you from place to place and show you how God's Grace reigns. And now, the sinner set free both from the chains of his old lusts and of his old despairing, says within himself--

"I'll to the gracious King approach, Whose scepter mercy gives; Perhaps He may command my touch, And then the suppliant lives."

I see him journeying towards a palace exceedingly fair and beautiful to look upon. As he enters the gate, he hears a whisper in his heart which is, "This is the Palace of Justice, you will be driven forth with shame from these walls, for you are too vile to have an audience here." Ah, but says he--

"I can but perish if I go, I am resolved to try! For if I stay away I know
I must forever die."

He traverses the passages of the house with beating heart, until at last he comes to the audience chamber and there, enthroned on light, he beholds a glorious King. The sinner dares not so much as look up, for he knows not whether he shall feel devouring fire, or whether Mercy shall speak to him with her silver voice. He trembles; he all but faints. When lo, reigning Grace who sits smiling upon a throne of love, stretches out its scepter and says, "Live, live." At that sound, the sinner revives; he looks up, and before he has fully seen the wondrous vision, he hears another Voice--"Your sins which are many are all forgiven you. I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins. I have chosen you and not cast you away," And

now, the sinner bowing low before the Throne of Jesus, begins to kiss His feet with rapture and delight, and He cries, "Rise, rise, My beloved one! I have put a fair jewel upon your neck. I have clothed you with ornaments--I have decked you with pearls and precious stones as a bridegroom decks out his bride. Go, then, and rejoice, for you are My son who was lost, but are found, who was dead, but is alive again." Never, perhaps, does Grace seem more glorious than when, with the silver scepter in her hand, she touches the despairing, fainting sinner and cries, "Live." My soul remembers that glad hour. I speak from out of the fullness of my heart. Oh, you golden moment, you shall never be forgotten, when Mercy said, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you."

But we must pass on. The man has now become a forgiven one--a saint--but Grace has not ceased to reign, nor has he ceased to need its reign. It is after sin is forgiven that the battle begins! If we had only Grace enough to transform us from sinners into saints, it were not worth having, because saints would soon return to their sins--unless Grace were constantly bestowed. And now let me show you a saint after he has been renewed by Grace. There he stands, Sir, and did you ever see a man in such a position as that! You have heard of battles, and you have sometimes read the story of some valiant hero around whom the battle made fearful center. He had to fight, with horses slain beneath him, standing on heaps of bodies which he had slain; behold his ardor, his courage, his burning valor, as he finds that he is the target for all arrows; that all the battle-axes and the spears are dashed and thrust against his person--that every son of wrath is thirsting for his blood! See now, he hurls about him a hail of iron blows. Right, left, and all around, his sword sweeps in awful circle. Now such is the true Christian--such and yet more solemn is his position. There has never

such a fight been seen on earth as that man must wage who hopes to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, for no sooner are we converted than at once Hell is alive against us, and earth is on fire with anger--and we have both earth and Hell to dispute our salvation! Young Christian do you tremble? Let me do with you as Elias did with his servant of old. Young man, you see horses and chariots that are innumerable--come with me and I will pray for you and touch yours eyes. What see you now? "Oh," he says, "I see the mountain full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire that are round about Elijah!" Blessed be His name, it is no vision--it is the very Truth of God--"More are they who are for us, than all they who are against us." And if the fray thickens, angels shall rush to the valley with their good swords to drive back the foe and the standard-bearer shall not fall, though fall full well he may! The soldier of Christ shall stand, for underneath him are the everlasting arms! He shall tread upon his enemies, and shall destroy them, in the words of Deborah of old, "Oh my soul, you have trod down strength." So then, Grace reigns in the thick battle of temptation, and makes those who are the subjects of its Kingdom more than conquerors through Him who has loved them!

To push still further. The man, being kept in temptation, has a work to do for his Lord. I have often felt that there is no case where Grace reigns more powerfully than in the use which God makes of such poor, infirm, feeble, decrepit creatures as His servants are. Let me show you a picture of Grace reigning. Do you see Peter there in Pilate's Hall, afraid of a little maid? He denies his Master, and with oaths and curses, he says, "I know not the Man." Wait awhile. Some six or seven weeks have passed, and there is a great crowd in the streets. There is a multitude gathered from all countries-- Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia. Who is to preach to them--who shall be

the minister? Grace--to your honor let it be told--you did not select John who stood at the foot of the Cross, nor he who was surnamed Zelotes, because of his zealousness--no, Peter, who denied his Master, must come forth to acknowledge Him afresh! And here he comes. I think I see him. Perhaps as he ascends the place where he is to speak, his heart whispers to him, "Simon, son of Jonas, what are you doing here?" The cock crows, Simon, and it reminds you that you denied your Lord; what are you doing here?" And then conscience seemed to say, "Are you the man to be a preacher--you? Give place. Can you hope to do any good, or to save immortal souls, such a feeble head-strong, presumptuous worm as you are?" But Grace is with him! Grace has touched his lips, and the cloven tongue is like a sword of fire within his mouth!

He comes forward--and he begins to speak. Soon the heavenly fire descends from Him, upon the multitude, and that day, 3,000 Baptisms tell what God can do, and how Grace can reign in the feeblest instrumentality! I am the living witness that God can make use of the weakest means to accomplish the mightiest results! In that day when you shall review the sling of David, and the ox-goad of Shamgar; when you shall have to look back upon Jael's nail, and these little things which have done great exploits, then shall I beg you to write down my name as that of one by whom many souls have been saved, but who, himself, has wondered more than you all, whenever God has blessed him, and whenever a soul has been saved by such an unworthy one! Grace, Grace, you can prevail! You have done it; You can make use of the meanest instruments to produce the grandest effects and to increase Your Glory among men!

I must still trespass upon you while I take you to another spot, to show you how Grace can reign where you little think it would ever live at all. The sea is agitated with a great storm, and a man has just been thrown into the sea; it is Jonah. A fish has swallowed him. That fish

dives into unfathomable depths, till the ocean has covered up both fish and Prophet. The earth with her bars is about him forever; the weeds are wrapped about his head. As the creature sucks in mouthful after mouthful of its food, there lies this man and yet he lives! Divine Grace is there preserving his life! Grace was there, even when the fish was led to swallow him, but can that man ever find deliverance? Is he not in trouble too great, and cast out from the very Presence of God? Listen! He groans out of the darkness of that living prison; he begins to cry towards the Temple of God. Grace, Grace, come forth--He divides the sea--He speaks to Leviathan--he comes up upon the dry land; he vomits forth the Prophet and he lives! Have you ever seen the like of that in your own case? Have you ever been in a strait and a trouble so difficult that you imagined there was no deliverance? If you ever have, I turn you to your own history as an illustration of how Grace can reign in redeeming you out of the most terrible trials! I tell you Brothers and Sisters, if all the troubles that ever came from Heaven; all the persecutions that ever came from earth; and all the afflictions that ever arose from Hell could meet on your poor devoted head, the reigning Grace of God would make you master of them all! You have never need to fear! Storms are the triumph of His art and Grace can steer the ship the better for tempestuous waves! Trust in the Lord, and do good; rest on His Grace, and hope in His mercy. When the water is very deep, He will put His hand beneath your chin, so that you shall not lose your breath. Or if you shall sink, He will sink with you; and if you should go to the very bottom, He will be at the very bottom with you! Wherever you go, He will be your Companion, saying to you, "Fear not, I will help you. I will be with you. When you go through the waters, you shall not be drowned, and when you go through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you."

I have thus shown you Grace reigning in the midst of spiritual death, spiritual bondage, spiritual despair--Grace reigning in the effort of judgment, Grace in the battle of temptation, Grace in the quagmires of infirmity, and Grace triumphant in the midst of our direst afflictions!

I need to give you but one other picture--Grace reigning in the hour of death--and triumphing in the moment of our entrance into Heaven! Last Friday evening, as I lay upon my bed having been much tossed about, and tempted and tried, it pleased God to visit His servant and cheer him somewhat. And among many sweet thoughts which gladdened my mind, I fell into a half-sleeping, and half-waking state, and I thought I saw an angel who came from the upper skies, and who had in his hand a crown. He said to me, "You have fought the good fight, behold your reward." And I waved my hand and said, "No, no, I cannot receive it! I am not worthy of it; I cannot take it." He said, "Heaven lies before you--enter." And I said, "No, I cannot. I deserve it not. I have no claim to any reward, no right to any rest, though it will be given to the children of God." And he looked at me, and he said, "It is of Grace and not of merit." Then I thought I would take the crown, but lo, I awoke and the dream was over! Yes, and I mused on that a long, long while, and I thought, if Heaven were by merit, it would never be Heaven to me, for if I were even in it, I would say, "I am sure I am here by mistake; I am sure this not my place; it is not my Heaven. I have no claim to it." I would walk among the redeemed, with their golden harps, and say, "No, no, you have what you have fought for, and have won, but I am an intruder here." I would be afraid of losing an inheritance to which I had no title, and of being cast out, at last, from a portion which I had no right to have obtained. But if it is of God's Grace and not of works--why, then, we may walk into Heaven with boldness! We may receive the crown with gladness, and sit down with the redeemed with

joy and confidence! I proclaim I never could enter Heaven, even if I might, if it were not of Divine Grace! I dare not in common honesty enter. Neither you nor I could claim a reward, or could ever dare to take it as a merited recompense. It must be given simply of God's free Love and Covenant faithfulness, or else, indeed, when given we should seem like robbers who had taken to ourselves what was not ours, and should always feel that the possession was not safe, because the title was not sound. It is of Grace, then.

And so, Beloved, when you come to die, Grace shall bear you up in the midst of Jordan and you shall say, "I feel the bottom and it is good." When the cold waters shall chill your blood, Grace shall warm your heart! When the eyes gather the death-glaze, and the light of earth is being shut out from you forever, Grace shall lift the curtains of Heaven and give you visions of eternity! And when at last the spirit leaps from time into eternal space, then Grace shall be with you to conduct you to your Father's house! And when the Judgment Throne is set, Grace shall put you on the right hand; Grace shall robe you about with Jesus' Righteousness; Grace shall make you bold to stand where sinners tremble, and Grace shall say to you, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."--

"It lays in Heaven the topmost stone.
And well deserves the praise."

And now I have conducted you into the many scenes, or rather into a few of them, where Grace reigns. I want you now, if you can, before we close, to take by faith a view of GRACE SITTING ON ITS THRONE. Begone vain thoughts; far removed be every worldly imagination! We are about to come into an awful Presence, and well may we cry, "Take off your shoes, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground." I think I

see the Throne of Grace! It is but through a glass darkly, but these eyes behold it. The Throne is placed upon the eternal hills of God's Immutable Purpose and Decree. Deep settled in unfailing wisdom, and unswerving love, these mountains never move. There they stand. While Nature changes, they move not, and though the sun may rise and set, they abide forever and forevermore the same! The Throne, itself, standing upon those lofty hills, has for its pedestal, Divine Fidelity, Divine Faithfulness, and the Eternal Will of God. Did you ever see such a Throne as that? The thrones of monarchs rock and reel, but this is settled, and abides forever in God's faithfulness and truth! It is true that the throne of many a dynasty has been cemented by blood and so is this, indeed, but not with the blood of murdered men, or of soldiers slain in battle. To make this Throne secure, it is cemented with the precious blood of the Son of God, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. No, as if this did not suffice, this Throne is settled by the eternal oath! God swears by Himself because He can swear by no greater, that by two Immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to Christ Jesus our Lord! Oh, Grace--I see Your Throne, I mark its solid base! A faithful and unchanging God lays the foundation of this Throne in oaths, and promises, and blood. And now look upward. Do you see the shining steps? The Throne is of pure white alabaster, and every step is of solid light. The steps are the Divine openings of Providence as He gradually develops His mighty scheme. And see on either side--as on the Throne of Solomon there were lions that did lie upon the steps--so on either side of the steps of the Throne of Grace I see two lions ready to guard and protect it. And who are these? Their names are Justice and Holiness! Let any attempt to assail that Throne, and Justice will devour them, and Holiness, with its fiery eyes, will utterly consume

them! Oh, glorious thought, Christian! That very Justice which once seemed to stand in the way of Grace, is one of the lions which guard the Throne; and that very Holiness which seemed once to put a barrier between your soul and bliss, now stands there as a mighty one to guard the seat and Throne of Sovereign Grace!

Now look upward, if your eyes can bear the light. You cannot see the full form and visage of the Lord of Grace--the King; but if you can dimly discern it--I see upon that Throne, One who--

"Looks like a Lamb who has been slain, And wears His priesthood still."

Yes, though you cannot see Him, yet He sees us, and that Divine Image is scattering mercies upon us even now! The eyes of Grace are the suns of the spiritual universe! The hands of Grace scatter lavish bounties throughout all the Church of the first-born, and those lips of Grace are uttering continually those once unspoken decrees which speak when they are fulfilled, and carried out in gracious Providences. But come here and look upward. Bow yourself in that Presence before which the angels cry, "Holy, holy, holy," and veil their faces with their wings!

See above the Throne, and above the Image and likeness of Him who sits thereon--above that Throne of Grace, behold, behold, THE CROWN! Was ever such a crown? No, it is not one, it is many--there are many crowns, and many jewels in each of the many crowns. And from where came these crowns of Grace? Oh, they are crowns that have been won in fields of fight; they are crowns, too, that have been given by grateful hearts. And there, as I gaze, I think I see many a soul that was once black with sin, made bright and sparkling, and there it is in the crown of Grace, glittering like a diamond and, my Soul, shall you be there? Shall you be one of those ever-glittering, undimmed jewels? Shall you be in that crown? Oh, glorious day, when shall you come, when I shall be a real jewel in the crown of Jesus? But are you not there now,

Brothers and Sisters? Have you not crowned Jesus Christ already, some of you? Have not you in your songs, and in your fires, felt that you must crown Him? And often, as we have sung that hymn, could you not sing it again?--

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of All!" Jesus, we crown You! We crown You. All hail! All hail! You King of kings--You God of Love. Behold Your Church bows herself before You--

"With vials full of odor sweet,
And harps of sweeter sound."

The elders chant before Your Presence and we, even we, adore You! Though silver of angelic praise, and gold of perfect melody we cannot boast--yet such as we have, we give You! Unto Him who sits upon the Throne--unto Him who lives and was dead--unto Grace, in the Person of the Lord Jesus, be glory and honor and majesty and power and dominion and might, forever and ever! Amen.

Chapter 44

Three Homilies From One Text

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"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. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people who were taken with different diseases and torments and those which were possessed with devils and those which were lunatic, and those who had the palsy. And He healed them. And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee and from Decapolis and from Jerusalem, and from Judea and from beyond Jordan." Matthew 4:23-25.

THE ministry of our most blessed Lord bears upon its own countenance the stamp of the Truth of God. "He taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes." Whatever His enemies might lay to His door, I do not find they were ever able to summon audacity enough to impeach His correctness, or suspect His sincerity. We believe that Jesus Christ's sermons were their own witnesses--the words He uttered had in them so much power to convict the conscience, that there would have been willfulness sufficient for the condemnation of the men who rejected His ministry--even though it had notbeen attended with supernatural credentials. Nevertheless, our Lord and Master--that unbelievers might have no cloak for their sin--was pleased to supplement His teachings with His miracles, so that the works which He did, as well as the words which He spoke, might bear witness of Him, that He came forth from God. Those miracles were to the men of that generation, the sign and seal and warrant, that Jesus was really sent of the Father.

Let us mark here, my Brothers and Sisters, how very different were the seals of Jesus' ministry from those which were given by Moses. When it was demanded of Moses to prove whether he was sent of God or not, he took the wonderworking rod in his hand and achieved prodigies; but if you will remember, they were all miracles of judgment--not of mercy. Did he not turn their rivers into blood and slay their fish? Did he not bring a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness which might be felt? Did he not smite their first-born--yes, and bring the waters of the Red Sea upon the chivalry of Egypt and so sweep them all away? And afterwards in the midst of the children of Israel, though there were miracles of mercy, yet for the most part, were they not miracles ofjudgment, and did not the people see different plagues and different wonders among them, even when they were in the wilderness? I repeat it--Moses, the type of the Law, has his credentials in judgment. How different with Jesus. He is full of Grace and truth, and the seals of His ministry must be works of beneficence, acts of mercy, and kindness. He turns not the water into blood, but He turns the water into wine. He slays not their fish, but multiplies a few small fishes and feeds thousands therewith! He does not smite their wheat with hail, and break their sycamore trees with His thunderbolts, but instead thereof, He multiplies the bread, He gives them many blessings. He sends no disease, and boils, and sores, but He heals their sicknesses. Instead of striking the first-born dead, He heals the dying, and rescues from the grasp of death some who had even gone down to the grave! This must be always a hopeful sign to the poor, trembling conscience. Jesus comes with deeds of mercy--these are indeed the warrants of His mission--"And why should He not come to me with deeds of mercy?" Let the poor disconsolate heart ask, "Why should He not work a wonder of mercy in me? If I had to deal with Moses, he might find it necessary to smite me

with death, to prove Himself sent of God. But if Jesus will still prove Himself to be full of Grace and truth, may He not work a wonder of mercy in washing away my sins, in saving my poor soul, clothing it with His robe of righteousness, and making me, at last, stand among the glorified?"

Having thus prefaced my text, permit me now to come more nearly and closely to it; and I think it will suggest three short homilies, three brief sermons, which I will endeavor to utter, and may God bless them! And first, it seems to me, in my text there is a brief homily for ministers upon the work of faith. Then a lecture to saints upon their labor of love. And yet again, a longer sermon full of encouragement to poor trembling sinners.

I. My text seems to me to contain A BRIEF AND PITHY HOMILY TO MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL--"Jesus Christ went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom." Does it not say to us, my Brothers in the ministry, that we should be instant in season, and out of season, preaching the Word? Does it not suggest to us, that perhaps we might preach more frequently? And that we might do more good if by journeying about from place to place we commanded a different audience, and so brought more hearers under the sound of the Word, and more hearts under the influence of the Truth of God? Do ministers of the Gospel preach as often as they might? Is there any precedent in Scripture for preaching two sermons on the Sabbath, and one during the week and doing no more? Ought we not to be more fully given up to our ministry? Should we not often be preaching the Word, and would it not be well with us if we could say with John Bradford, "I count that hour lost in which I have not either with tongue or with pen said something for the world's good, and for my Master's honor"? Might we not be less particular about our preparation? Oh, how much there is of worldly

flesh-pleasing in our pruning up our sentences, and trying to polish our periods! Might not that time which is spent in studious elaboration be much more profitably spent in public exhortation? And might we not get more power by practicing the ministry than we can by sitting still, and endeavoring to catch the sacred spell from books, though written by the wisest of men?

Is it not, after all, a fact that the blacksmith's arm is made strong, not by studying a book upon nerves, and upon anatomy, but by using his hammer? And is not the minister to achieve power in his ministry rather by the exercise of it than by any learning or teaching that he can ever procure? Might it not be, perhaps, less for our honor, but more for our Master's Glory, if we preached more frequently and itinerated more widely, and here and there, and everywhere, preached the Word of Jesus? I know some Brothers who have remained in one place so long without having ever gone from it, that the people know the very tones of their voice, and they go to sleep under it almost out of necessity! If these Brothers, without giving up their charge, would spend many weekdays in going abroad to preach in the streets, in the highways and hedges, to preach under God's blue sky, it would do their very voices good! Oh there is no place like it when you have a little hillock for your pulpit, ten or twenty thousand people gathered around you, and the heavens for your sounding board! Whitefield used to call it his throne and well, indeed, he might; for there is a marvelous power which thrills through the soul of a man when--there unshackled and free--he stands with thousands of earnest eyes gazing upon him, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ! If I can only convince ministers that the work to which they are called is not restricted to their pulpits, but that they ought to come out of their pulpits and preach the Gospel to every creature--I shall feel that this short homily has been worthy

of being expounded. I do not believe if we preach in our own pulpits from the first of January to the last of December, that we shall clear our heads from the blood of men, provided that is we have voice and strength equal to the labor. You are not to sit still and expect sinners to come to you. Soldiers of Christ are not everlastingly to lie in the trenches. Up, men and at them--up and charge upon your foes! If you would win souls, you must seek them!

The sportsman knows that his game will not come to the window of his house to be shot. The fisherman knows that the fish will not swim up to his door. Do they not go abroad and seek their prey? And so must you and I! If we would win souls, we must not stand forever in one place, but wherever there is found opportunity--be it in an uncanonical place, yes, be it in a place that has been desecrated to the service of Satan--even there, let us preach the name of Jesus; and we shall see greater things than it is ever possible for us to behold by going on in our old way of routine--standing in our square hut of a thing called a pulpit, and hoping to win souls by prophesying there! I sometimes wish that some of our congregations were without buildings, or that they might be driven out of them--for some of them have stuck inside their own doors so long, that everybody seems content to dwell there with spiders and cobwebs, and never to come forth to make a stir in the world! Why, if the 150 Baptist Churches of London, let alone all the members of other denominations, did but feel that they are not to be bounded within four walls, and that their work is not to be done in regular spheres, but everywhere--surely there would be better days for London, and we would have to rejoice that God had made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people!

II. And now I turn to my second homily, which is not for ministers particularly, but FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN GENERAL. We read in the

Matthew 4:24--"And they brought unto Him all sick people who were taken with different diseases and torments and those which were possessed with devils and those which were lunatic and those who had the palsy; and He healed them."

Let the emphasis rest upon those few words, "They brought unto Him all sick people." We have here assembled, my Brothers and Sisters, a very large number of persons who know the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, and who love it in their hearts, for they have felt its power, and they bless God that they know it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. To you I speak, Brothers and Sisters! Now that you are yourselves redeemed and converted, there is a great work laid upon you. You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of this world; you are a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid. Your business is from this time forth to do battle against the powers of darkness and to seek, as much as lies in you, to pluck sinners as brands from the awful burning! I would stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, upon this solemn duty. Do you exercise it as you should? Are you, all of you, longing to be the winners of souls? Have you all the laudable ambition of being fathers and mothers in Israel, by bringing others to that Cross which is so precious to you?--

"Do you gladly tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found? Point them to His redeeming blood,
And say, 'Behold the way to God?'"

Some of you can say, "Yes," but none of us can say that we have done as much, and as well as we ought to have done! Permit me to give you a thought which may, perhaps, help you, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, in your work of faith, and labor of love for the redemption of the souls of men. Let me tell you that if you would have souls saved, you must bring them to Jesus! "But," you say, "they must come

themselves." Yes, I answer they must if they shall ever be saved, but before they will ever come themselves, you must bring them! You notice in the text, those men who had the palsy could not walk to Christ, but others brought them. Many of those poor demoniacs would not come, but they bound them hand and foot, and made them come! Doubtless, some of the lunatics struggled very hard not to be brought, but they would bring them; and people who were very near death's door, who could not stir hand or foot, and were unconscious--they were brought, too. The loving earnestness of their friends supplied the lack of strength in themselves; they could not come, but their friends could bring them! And now you say you have little power to do good, but I think in this matter you have far more power than you dream of. You can bring sick souls to Christ. Do you ask me how? I answer, first by prayer If you would select some one person, and lay his case specially before God in prayer, and never cease your supplications till you were heard for that one, you will have reason to attest that God is verily One who hears and who answers prayer. And if you should have sufficient faith to carry five or six, no, to carry a whole family on the loving arms of your prayers up to the Mercy Seat of God, you will find that in answer to your fervent cry, they will assuredly be saved! Oh, there are many of us here who were brought to Christ by our mothers. We knew it not, but they were carrying our names, like the high priest of old, upon their breasts before the Lord, while we were living in sin, and indulging in iniquity. There are men here who were converted to God instrumentally by their sisters; for when they were going on in all their gaiety and frivolity, a loving sister was weeping for them, or pleading with God both night and day, that her brother might live! And I do not doubt hundreds of you have been brought to God by your minister, because your minister has made you the object of prayer and

has pleaded with God for you. And many of you by the elders of the Church--by the deacons, or by others, who, looking upon you as a congregation, have fixed their eyes on someone and said, "That interesting young man, I will make him a matter of prayer--that intelligent father of a family who has stepped in, but who only comes occasionally, he shall be the subject of my petition." In fact, I think it probable that when the records of eternity shall be unfolded, it shall be found that every soul that came to Christ was brought instrumentally by some other--not, perhaps, by any visible means--but some other person praying for that man and God heard that prayer and so that soul was saved. Have you any sick in your house? Bring them out on the bed of prayer to Christ! Mother, bring out your sick son, and your sick daughter! Wife, bring out your demoniacal husband who seems as if he were possessed of the devil! I say to one and another among you, bring out that friend of yours who acts as if he were mad with sin, like a very lunatic! Bring them all out as they did of old, and plead this day with Christ for their salvation!

I think I see that day when Jesus walked through the streets of Capernaum. No sooner did He rise in the morning, than, stepping outside, He saw a bed here, and a mattress there, and a couch there--multitudes assembled with all manner of sick folks--some of them leaning on crutches and saying, "When will the morning come?" And there was a good deal of struggling as to who should get the best place, and who should be nearest to Him as He came outside. At last, you would hear if you were half a mile from the house where Jesus is residing, you would hear a buzz--"He is coming out! He is coming out!" And then He would come forth from the house, and touching some lunatic, He would cool his fevered brain, and the man would fall at His feet and begin to kiss Him. But, before he

could pay his homage, Christ would have touched some palsied or paralytic man, and he would be cured; and going onwards, dropsy, fevers, devils all fly before Him! And then you would see a great crowd as they all came behind Him, some of them waving the crutches they no longer required; some blind man holding up in the air the bandage he used to wear to conceal those horrid eyes of his, out of which he could not see! Yes, and all of them crying, "Blessed be the name of the Son of David! Blessed be His name!" Oh, I am sure had you been there that day, if you had a sick daughter, you would hire any help to bring her out! You would have said, "Let her be brought out and He will heal her." And so it is today! Jesus is here this morning and here you are--sick upon beds--the beds of your indifference and carelessness. Here you are subject to many sins and lusts and passions. The Master walks among you--"Now, Christians! NOW! Lift up your prayers! Now bear upon your arms of faith these poor cripples, lame, deaf and dumb souls, and cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on them." And His walk of love of old shall be eclipsed in the grandeur of His walk of loving kindness and tender mercy which He shall exercise today!

In addition, however, to the arms of prayer, take care that you bring your relatives to Christ on the arms of your faith Ah, faith is that which puts strength into prayer. The reason why we do not receive the answer to our supplications is because we do not believe we shall be heard. You remember my sermon the other Sabbath morning from the text, "Whatever things you shall desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them"?

If you can exercise faith for a dead soul, that dead soul shall be quickened and receive faith itself! If you can look to Christ with the eyes of faith for a blind soul, that blind soul shall have sight given it and it shall see! There is a wonderful power in vicarious

faith--faith for another! Not that anyone of you can be saved without faith, yourself. But when another believes for you, and on your account quotes the promise before God for you, you may be unconscious of it, but God hears and answers that faith, and breathes on your soul and gives you faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not think Christians exercise this power enough; they are so busy with faith about their troubles, faith about their sins, faith about their personal experiences, that they have not time to exercise that faith for another. Oh but surely that gift was never bestowed upon us merely for our own use, but for other people! Try it, Christian--and see whether God is not as good as your faith when your faith is exercised concerning the soul of your poor neighbor, of your poor drunken kinsman, or of some poor soul who up to now has defied every effort to reclaim him from the error of his ways! If we can bring souls by faith, Jesus Christ will heal them!

And I might add here, that in the ministry of the Gospel there is great need that ministers should bring souls to God by faith. How often you hear the question put, "What is the reason of such-and-such a man's power in preaching?" I will tell you what is the reason of anyman's power if it is worth having! It is not his retentive memory; it is not his courage; it is not his oratory, but it is his faith. He believes God is with him and acts as if it were so; he believes that his preaching will save souls, and preaches as if he believed it! He staggers not at the Word, and does not mince and try to prove what he says, but speaks out boldly what God has sent him to speak, knowing that what he says is true, and must be received. And then he believes that the Word will be blessed, and it is blessed--and then men still wonder and say, "Why is it?" It is faith! That is the secret of any man's success. I refer you, if you want proof, to the lives of all

those who God has ever blessed. Look at Paul or Peter in the canon of Scripture. Look at such men as Martin Luther and John Calvin in the annals of Church history. Why, you could not catch them doubting at any moment! Look at Luther when he comes up into the pulpit. He is a man who has no neck; he has got his head set right down on his shoulders; he believes with his heart, and speaks with his mouth. His convictions and his utterances are in the closest alliance. Then people say, "What a dogmatist he is!" Of course! A man must be, if he would do any good! Hear how he preaches! He knows he is right, and he does not allow a momentary doubt upon it. He talks to men as if he were sure that God had given him a message for them, and the people believe that God has given him a message and it is proven that it is so! But some other of the Reformers might have come and occupied his place, and the reformation would have been a failure, because with more wisdom, and yes, perhaps more love, than Luther had, they would have had less faith and their preaching would have had less effect! The fact is we need to feel within our ministry that the power lies very much in the faith which is exercised in it. I believe that the true minister of Christ, though he cannot heal the sick, ought to preach with as firm a faith in the authority and power of his ministry through the Holy Spirit, as did Peter and John when they said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!" Some ministers dare not say this. They cannot preach to dead sinners; they do not like to exhort them, because, they say, "The sinner has not any power." Whoever thought he had? But there is power in your ministry to make them live if God sent you! Your business is to say, "You dry bones live!"--not because there is power in yourvoice, but because your voice is the echo of Jehovah's voice! Speak Jehovah's Truth by the high warrant of Jehovah, Himself, and you must believe that those dry bones will live, for live they

must. Before the power of faith nothing is impossible!

Earnestly would I pray for all of us who preach the Word that we may have this power to bring souls before Jesus, not looking to their free will, not looking to their soft hearts--above all not looking to our own power of speech--but looking to the power of the Gospel, as we speak it, and believing that there is still in it a power to cast out devils, to quicken the dead, and to heal the sick--and we shall find it to be so! Oh, my Brothers, think not that the preaching of the Word of God is on a level with mere lecturing or talking upon subjects that may be of thrilling interest. The moment a man preaches God's Truth, if God has sent him, he is gifted with a power which no learning or eloquence can confer upon another man whom God has not called. A man preaches with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven! His every word is a thunder stroke--one tremendous lightning blast among the sons of men--and God acknowledges him and God blesses him, or, if God does not acknowledge him, and does not bless him, he has good reason to believe that God never sent him--that he is not a servant of God--that the Lord has not raised up nor qualified him for the salvation of the souls of men! My homily then, is this, that it should be the business of every Christian--of ministers, perhaps, in particular--but of all, in their measure, to bring those who won't come to Christ, and to bring them to Christ by their prayers, by their faith, and by their authoritative and believing preaching knowing that God has always sanctioned prayer for others, and has accepted faith and heard that faith, and in reply to it, has given faith to the unbelieving one. Is there anyone here of so cold a heart that he is saying, "Whom shall I bring to Christ?" I hope not; for whenever a man asks what he shall do, I feel I could say with Pharaoh, "You are idle; you are idle." There is so much to be done that the question should be "What out of a hundred things shall I do?" Bring

not those who live in the same street, or court, or alley--bring those who sit in the same pew with you on Sunday, or dwell in the same part of this great city! And--oh if it should ever come to pass!--that all these be saved--look across the sea and bring before God in prayer those teaming myriads of souls that as yet sit in darkness, and in the Valley of the Shadow of Death! Plead with God for sinners who are under Popish night, or have but the moonlight of Islam, or those who are in still blacker darkness, bowing down before their gods of wood or of stone!

O Church of God! If you had but faith to bring out your sick, what wonders might be worked! Oh, if the Church could but lay China and India before her Lord, believing that He had power to save--if she would bring out Italy and France and Spain and lay them, as it were, like sick men in their beds before Jesus Christ, earnestly believing in His power to heal them! Alas, we have not power to believe in Christ yet, but when we have power to believe, we shall never find Christ's power to be inferior to our power to believe Him! May the Lord yet increase His people's confidence, until their prayers shall extend for the conversion of the islands of the sea; until they shall bring the whole world, with all its hideous deformities and infirmities, and lay it there like a poor paralytic on his couch and in one tremendous cry say, "O Lord, let Your Kingdom come and let Your will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven!" And it shall be done. Faith shall achieve it. God shall hear the cry of faith, and the world shall yet become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!

III. I have now some little time reserved for my main business this morning and oh, may God make the last part of the sermon very, very useful, to those who up to now have been strangers to Him. The last part of my text is A SERMON ADDRESSED BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO POOR

SINNERS--to those who have never undergone a change of heart--have never been regenerated and passed from death to life.

Sinner, look on my text and take encouragement, for as Jesus Christ healed all sorts of diseases, so He is able at this day to heal all sorts of sins. Great physicians generally have some specialty. One man is famous for his cures of deformed feet. Another has peculiar gifts with regard to diseases of the heart; and some seem to be greatly successful in their treatment of the eyes. But Jesus Christ is a Physician who is equally skillful in all cases--His love and His blood are precious medicines that are able to cure all diseases--whatever sort they may be; however long they may have been endured, and how deeply so ever rooted they may be in the human system. Christ is able to cure all sorts of sins! Are you today possessed with the fever of lust? He can cool your hot blood and make you chaste and honest! Do you suffer today from the dropsy of drunkenness? He can cure you of it, and you shall no more go to your cups to wallow therein! Are you now today blind, or deaf, or dumb, after a spiritual sort? He can remove all these infirmities! Do you suffer from stones in your heart? He can take the stony heart away and give you a heart of flesh! Whatever your disease--though you have become a very lunatic in your sin--such that the laws of your country have had to hold you fast in prison, and though now you are so wild that men call you a very devil in iniquity--so that you have become a demon--He has power to heal you now! Oh, cast yourself on your face before him and cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Oh, Jesus, stop and look upon some of all sorts, and let them be saved! Do you know, Sinner, whatever may have been your peculiar vice, there is a pattern in the Bible for you--a pattern of mercy to show that just such an one as you has already been saved! John Bunyan says in his, "Grace Abounding"--"Whenever I hear of a poor

drunkard saved, I always say, 'Then the door is open for every drunkard!' If I hear of a great adulterer, a great thief, or a great harlot being saved, then I say, 'Those who are of a like sort with these men and women, may take heart and say, 'Then the door is open for me!'" Why, you know if you are ever sick and meet with an advertisement in a paper--perhaps a wrong one--of some person whose case was just like yours--if upon application, you should meet with this man and he should say, "Yes, my symptoms were the same. My disease lasted just as long. I was just as sad, and sick, and wasting as you are. I went to such a doctor and he has healed me." Oh, it makes you feel as if you were half-cured already! "Then, Sir," you say, "my case is not altogether hopeless. He has healed the likes of me, he can heal me." Oh, Sinner, take this, I beseech you, to your soul as a comfort! There have been sinners saved who were just like you; and there are some in Heaven who were once just such as you are. And when you shall come to Heaven, you will not be one by yourself, but there will be those who will tell you they have sinned as you have sinned, that they have rebelled as you have rebelled, and yet Divine Grace saved them! Oh, there are many in Heaven who are like the stars in the sky called Gemini, the twins. There are many sacred clusters--Pleiades of great stars--divine constellations of men who plunged into like sin, and like iniquity, all redeemed and made to shine in the firmament of Heaven as stars forever and ever! Be of good cheer, Sinner, I know not who you are, nor what has been your sin, but there has been a sinner like you saved--just like you--and why may not you? Oh, may it be true in your case, that you may be saved! Christ not only healed sinners of all sorts, but He healed incurable sinners--people who had diseases which were not within the reach of the physicians' skill. The palsied and the lunatic, especially, were considered in the East to be quite beyond all

medical power, and it is believed by many eminent commentators that nearly all the diseases which Jesus Christ healed were those which were called the laughter of physicians, because they put all surgical skill, all medical power to scorn. Jesus Christ healed incurable diseases, and He is able to heal even incurable sinners! "Why," says one, "that is just what I am! I believe I am incurable." There have been many incurables that have been cured here. When I look at my Church book and see the story of many, many souls, I cannot help looking upon this Exeter Hall as having been an hospital for incurables! Why there have been sinners who never entered into a place of worship for twenty-five, thirty, or 40 years! Swearers, blasphemers--men who had committed every crime in the catalog of iniquity--and Sovereign Grace met with them here! They sit here this very day, and if it were the proper time and place, they would stand up and say "That is true. I was one of the incurables, but free, rich Grace renewed my heart and changed my soul!" And now, you incurable souls--you incorrigible dogs--you who have gone on so long that friends and companions have given you up--there is hope yet, there is hope yet! Yet may you break your fetters--yet live--yet become a Christian, and rejoice with the people of God! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved! You remember when Christ died, He told His disciples to preach to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, because there were the biggest sinners in Jerusalem. There were the men there who had pierced His side; they had put that sponge full of vinegar to His lips. "Begin with them," He said. "Begin with them!" And so Jesus loves to begin with you. Believe me, when my Master sends me out fishing, He does not bid me go and fish for minnows, but to harpoon you who are like great whales and leviathans in iniquity! Oh, Spirit of God, send in the shaft this morning, and may some incurable soul this day begin to think that if there is mercy for him,

it is time for him not to despise the mercy, but to turn to God with full purpose of heart! Jesus healed incurable diseases.

Let us proceed to add that Jesus healed diseases from all countries, and so He can heal sinners of all lands. "There followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judea and from Jordan." Here are people assembled this morning from all lands. I look about me, and I can very easily discern some score of American Brothers and Sisters from across the sea. A great many, of course, dwell in London. But there is a representation here, perhaps, of every county in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland--some from all parts--Brethren from Germany, some of all people come together here to listen to the Word of God. And be it sweet in your ears, you of many languages and countries, who as yet have never found the Savior, that He is able to save without any distinction of race or clime, or time, or place! There is one Fountain for us all, my Brothers and Sisters, one robe of righteousness, and that, too, always of the same fashion for every one of us! There is one precious name at which we all must bow, and one sure salvation upon which we all must build! Oh, that we may all build upon Christ and all find Jesus precious today! Have you come from the far West, my Brother, and have you never thought of Jesus yet? Oh, think of Him today! Perhaps the Lord brought you across the Atlantic to save you, and He will send you back a new man. Have you come from the busy haunts of New York, where every man is bustling, and seeking to make his own fortune? Maybe you are come to make your fortune. Perhaps you may this day win the pearl of great price! Oh, I pray God it be so. Lord, hear this prayer! May some soul find Jesus now! And oh, my farming friends, you have come up today, have you? You came up yesterday to attend your market, and you have come today to listen to the Word. I pray that you may go back to your family with a

new heart, and though you used to be a brandy drinker, and often to frighten your poor wife when you came home late, I pray that you may have to say to her, "Blessed be God, I am a new man!" I trust it will turn out to be so, and that you will have to say, "It was that Sunday that I spent in that Hall that the Lord came, and though I struggled hard, He would have me; though I seem to shut both my eyes and heart against Him, yet in came the Word and like as a hammer it broke the iron crust of my soul, and then like a fire melted the very vitals of my spirit, till the tears ran down my hardened cheeks." Again, I say, be it so and unto God shall be all the Glory! If you have come from the very end of the earth today; from a land where you have seldom if ever heard the Gospel, oh, that you may hear it now, and like the Ethiopian eunuch, go back to tell to others the message which you have heard with your own ears, and received in your own heart! Christ knows, then, no distinction between sinners. They may be of every land.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ healed sinners without any limitation in numbers. They brought to Him, as you will perceive, all sorts of sick people, and all manner of diseases. "And there followed him great multitudes." The Physician was just as able to heal a thousand as fifty! When the crowd grew and increased till probably they covered acres of ground, He walked in among them, and as the sick lay there, the healing virtue never ceased. It was like the widow's oil. It lasted as long as it was needed. And as many vessels as there were to fill, on flowed the oil and never stopped, till at last the vessels were full of mercy! So is it today. Here is a crowd gathered together; a great multitude! Christ is as able to save a multitude as to save one. The same word which is blessed to one sinner, may be blessed to 50 sinners. Old Trapp says, "Though there was such a great crowd, we do not find that anyone of them kept the other back, and so though there may be as

great a multitude as ever coming to Christ, there is plenty of room for them." It is not like a place of worship that is too small, where some must turn away, but here is room enough for all who come, enough for all who seek, enough for all who trust, enough for all who believe! No sinner was ever sent back empty, who came to seek mercy for Jesus Christ's sake.

Upon none of these points must I stay long. Jesus Christ healed all these, but He received nothing for all that He did, except the fame, and the honor, and the gratitude of their loving hearts. So today, poor Sinner, Jesus will take nothing at your hands, and it is a mercy for you, for you have nothing to give! If you had to wait for salvation till you could fashion one good work, you would have to wait forever, for when you have brought one that looked like the real silver of good works, you will find it is some poor plate, and when you do begin to rub it with a little self-examination, the bare metal will soon appear, and the thin film of silver soon rubs away! I tell you, Sinner, you could never find a good thoughtthat you have ever had that would not be so mixed with sin and infirmity as to take all its goodness away! But Jesus needs nothing from you--He bids you come and welcome! Rutherford says, "All the saints in Heaven sit rent free; they never bought their thrones, and they do not pay for them even now." Poor Sinner, I tell you, when you come to Christ, you must come without toll, without money, without hindrance--

"All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him!
This He gives you,
It is His Spirit's rising beam!"

He does not ask experience of you--He does not ask Grace and fruits of you--He will give you all these for nothing. If you come to Him just as

you are, covered with the rags of your sin, yes, and perhaps with rags literally, too, He will receive you! Though you have dived into the kennels of sin and vice, and are smothered with the mire of iniquity--He will wash you clean, He will clothe you with the robe of righteousness--He will put away your sins and save your souls! A gratisGospel--a Gospel of Grace--the Gospel which asks nothing of us, but gives all to us--this is the Gospel that I preach! Look to Jesus and be saved!

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so will I lift up Christ! Behold His wounds--His pierced hands, His bleeding feet; behold His side open for you! Sinner, His death must be your life--His wounds must be your healing! Trust, I beseech you, in what He did! Repent of the sins you have committed--but trust Christ for merit which He has performed! The moment your soul trusts Christ--that moment your sins are all forgiven you! The moment you put your arms about the Cross--that moment you are saved, yes, and saved beyond risk of being lost! Oh, that now you might say--

"Just as I am, without one plea, But that His blood was shed for me;
And that He bids me come-- Oh Lamb of God, I come."

May God now add His own blessing, and may Jesus walk among us still to heal, for His own name's sake. Amen.

Chapter 45

Man'S Weakness--God'S Anointing

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me." 2 Samuel 3:39.

You will remember that David was secretly anointed king over Israel by Samuel, but he waited many a weary year before the crown actually rested upon his head. For a long time he was an exile from the very country of which he was afterwards to be the sovereign. He was hunted about by the remorseless cruelty of Saul till he became like a partridge upon the mountains, and the feet of the wild roe were not more used to flight than those of David. A band of men gradually gathered round him, over whom he became the captain, and he lived the life of an adventurer, the leader of heroic soldiers, who at once protected their country from its foreign foes, and sheltered its disaffected subjects. At last Saul fell in battle upon Mount Gilboa, and Jonathan, the heir-at-law to the throne, also fell upon that dewless mountain. David was assured of the death of Saul by the fact that the head of the king was brought to him by an Amalekite, whose crime he punished with death, though the rogue hoped to have been rewarded with abundance of treasure.

David's own kinsmen at once recognized him as the leader of their clan and he, in Hebron, began to reign over Judah and the south of the country. But the mass of the nation had not yielded to him and Abner, the commander-in-chief of Saul's standing army, fearful lest he might lose his influence, and be supplanted by Joab, who naturally would become commander-in-chief under David, set up Ishbosheth as the

successor of Saul. And so there became two kingdoms; David was the acknowledged head of the one, and Ishbosheth, the master of the larger part of the territory. Abner was playing king-maker and he soon showed that he felt his power and meant to use it. Having engaged in a quarrel with Ishbosheth, on account of Abner's desire to take to wife a concubine of Saul, he at once resented the interference of Ishbosheth, and determined to put down the king whom he himself had put up. He came to David, therefore, and made terms with him, upon which he would give up to him the kingdom, and Ishbosheth would cease to be his rival. Joab hears of this, and not wishing to be supplanted, and perhaps seriously believing that Abner was not honest, follows after him, entices him back, and just outside the walls of Hebron, a City of Refuge, slays him in cold blood--a most dastardly and treacherous murder! David had nothing to do with it; he did his best to exonerate himself from it, and pronounced an awful curse upon Joab, the murderer, and upon all his posterity. He had not, however, the manly courage to summon Joab to the bar as a murderer. David was afraid of him; the man had all the army at his back--and instead of being, as in his youthful days, fearless of man, David became for a while a time-server and permitted the guilty to escape. He prepared a glorious funeral for Abner, and made Joab walk as mourner in the train, accompanied by his king, who sang a poetic and mournful dirge over the bleeding corpse. Then David said to his courtiers and friends, "I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me. The men who have been my bravest comrades and stood by me in the darkest hour, have been too hard for me. They have compelled me to submit to an action which my soul detests; they are criminals whom I cannot punish. The sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me."

It was necessary to state these historical particulars in order to set

my text in its context, and now I wish to show how this passage in sacred history is but the transcript of what has occurred many and many a time in the history and experience of all the people of God.

I. The first remark I shall make will be this. We may be anointed and yet weak. Every Believer is an anointed king. He was really anointed in the Covenant of Election before the world was. When Jesus Christ was set up from everlasting, His people were really set up in Him. When He was proclaimed King, and when His Father promised glorious honors to Him as the result of what He would do, His people were really constituted a royal priesthood in the Person of their Representative and Covenant Head. Every child of God also was actually anointed when Jesus Christ ascended up on high and led captivity captive and received gifts for men. When Jesus took His seat at the right hand of the Eternal Father, amidst the songs of angels and the shouts of cherubim, all His elect in Him did virtually take their thrones. "For He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." But in our souls, our anointing time comes in that hour when, being called by Divine Grace and washed from sin, we begin to reign over sin, self, the world, death and Hell, by virtue of our union with Christ. Every Believer is a king today! It may be that he does not wear his crown, and lives beneath his dignity; yet he is a king by Divine right. He is of a kingly, no, of a Divine race--he is sprung from the loins of the King of kings, and he is soon to enter upon his full dominion--for when Jesus shall appear, then being like He is, he shall reign with Him forever and ever!

The Christian is then, today, in many more senses than I can now stay to enumerate, an anointed king, and yet it is quite possible that he may be groaning out, "I am weak;" for weakness and Divine anointing may stand together! You may be the object of God's grandest purposes; and

yet in yourself, you may be the meanest of men. God may yet intend to accomplish by you the greatest marvels, and it may be necessary that, as a prelude to these wonders, you who are God's anointed should be compelled to feel very deeply your utter weakness!

God's children are often very weak in faith--they stagger at the promises through unbelief. It is not always in their power to "set to their seal that God is true." They always have the seal of God on them, but they cannot always set their seal to God's promises. There are times when the strength of the flesh through sin has overcome the powers of the soul-- when we can get no further than to cry, "I would, but I cannot believe; I do not doubt His love to His people, but it is a grave question with me, whether I am one of His people at all." Christians have ebbs of faith as well as floods; they have winters as well as summers; they have times of drought and years of famine. Sometimes they are diminished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow; the eyes of their faith grow dim and the light of God's Countenance, being withdrawn from them, it becomes a woeful day for them, and they sigh and cry, and groan, and scarcely can call their lives their own. "Oh," cries one, "that is my condition, but I thought I could not be a child of God, for I said, 'If it is so, why am I thus?'" Oh, this is a common failing with the Lord's people! Think not that your name is cut out of the register because of the weakness of your faith; for there are many in Heaven whose names on earth were Little-Faith, and Ready-to-Halt, and Despondency, and Much-Afraid! You may be an anointed king, and yet exceedingly weak in your faith.

The weakness of a Christian's faith may also affect all his other Graces. It must do so; for when faith is strong, every other Grace is strong; when that is weak, all things else decline. It may be today that your hope has become very dim; you are in bondage through fear of

death, and see not the mansions in the skies. You have forgotten that you are in Christ, and now you no more look for His appearing. Your hope declines, and all your comfort dies. All this is possible, and yet you may be an anointed king. Pluck up heart, my Brothers! When you cannot read your title, the inheritance is just as sure; when you cannot feel your union with Christ, the union is none the less a fact! And when you dare not hope, even then--if you are Christ's--your soul is in His hands, and you shall never perish, and neither shall any pluck you from Him. Let me add again that when the Christian grows weak in his faith and hope, it is no wonder that he is feeble in all his efforts to serve his master. "Oh," says one, "I preach now, but have no power in preaching; I pray, but it is not prayer; I totter on the knees which should be strong. I, who could once prevail, and bid defiance to earth and Hell, now tremble like Peter before a little maid, and am downcast and abashed by the smallest threat or calumny from the lips of my meanest foe." Oh, but Christian, all this is possible, too, and yet you may be an anointed king; for there is a sad difference between the estate of God's people now, and their glory, by-and-by, yes, and a wondrous difference now between the privileges to which they have a right, and the privileges to which they have the power to attain! Sure, if they were what they might be, and what they should be, they would be on earth well nigh as happy as in Heaven! God has given them power to tread on serpents, and to defy the violence of flames; He has girded them with a majesty unrivalled and unequalled; He has put a crown of pure gold on their heads; even now He has shod them with badgers' skins, and clothed them with blue and purple, and fine linen. He has made them kings and priests unto God, even this day, and they dwell in the curtains of Solomon! They have His Providence for their provision; they have His angels for their servitors; they have His Heaven for

their last resting place, and His bosom for their reposing place today; and yet are they often weak, and often cast down by reason of trouble, and the strength of the flesh, and the perversity of their corrupt hearts. "I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, are too hard for me."

My dear Brothers and Sisters, let me remark that David at this special time felt his weakness more particularly because he was in a new position. David had been an adventurer in the cave so long, that he had grown used to it, and you never find him saying when he hid himself in Engedi, "I am this day weak." No, after the first season of bitterness, I believe he came to love Adullam's dreary cave; and the bleak mountains were dear to him; but he has come into a new place--nations are at his feet--men bow before him! It is a new position and he says, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." Whenever you make a change in life; whenever God calls you to another set of duties, you will surely find out what perhaps you do not now believe--that you are weak, though anointed king.

Here, too, David had come into new temptations. The arrows had been shot at him before, from one direction alone; now the storm ceases on one side, and begins on the other! If men knew that the storm would always come to one side of the house, they would repair and strengthen it, and then they would not fear the blast; but if all of a sudden it whirled round and took the other corner, how would they be prepared for that? Take care, Christian men and women, how you change your position--often it is a change for the worse--the arrows may not fly on the right, but they will meet you on the left, and perhaps that may be your weakest side, and there will you be smitten in the most tender part. David had now no more the temptations which beset a venturer, but those which cluster thick around the throne; for where there is the

honey of royalty, there will surely be the wasps of temptations! High places and God's praise seldom well agree. A full cup is not easily carried without spilling, and he who stands on a pinnacle needs a clear head and much Grace.

And then further, David had now come into new duties. It was his duty to have taken Joab, and have made him suffer the full penalty of the law for having killed Abner. A king must defend the oppressed and avenge the murdered--but David fails to perform the new duty, for he feels that he is too weak.

Brothers and sisters, I shall leave this point when I have only called you to remember that whether you know it or not, whether new circumstances shall have shown it to you or not, you are this day weak, though anointed kings! You are never more mistaken than when you think yourselves strong; you are never nearer the truth than when you have the very lowest views of yourself; when you are stripped and emptied, and poured from vessel to vessel, it is then that you are where you ought to be. When you can say, "I can do nothing apart from Him," and yet can feel that you can do everything with Him--then you are on the verge of safety--you are on the eve of triumph and honor; God is with you, and will greatly bless you as long as you know where your great strength lies!

II. The second head. It was but little wonder that David's kingdom was weak, for it was but newly gained; and it is but little marvel if we, also, are very weak in the beginning of our spiritual life. When a king has had time to set himself down upon his throne, and to sweep away before him this party and that, either by politics or by the power of the sword, and so to put down every rival, then his throne becomes confirmed. But here is David, a man who is not descended from the royal race--and who, apart from the Divine Anointing, which the sons of

Belial would never recognize, had no right to the throne whatever. And it is not much wonder that the house of Saul should be troublesome to him, and that his old comrades, taking too much upon themselves because of their past services, should be too strong for him to manage! Young Christian, it is no wonder that you are weak, when the good work has only lately begun with you! See the lambs in the fold--it is well that they have been shorn in good weather--for what would become of the shorn lamb in the untempered wind? Shall we suppose that the young sapling shall stand as firmly as the oak with its gnarled roots, and its hoary branches which have been twisted together by many a storm? What? Shall a babe fight a battle? Shall a new-born infant go forth to war? Do you wonder because the new creature is weak? Wonder rather at its power, than at its weakness! Does Satan triumph over you, and do you marvel that old Satan is more than a match for a young Christian? Does the old world sometimes oppress your heart, and are you astonished that an old world, with a thousand arts, should be too much for a babe like you? Does your old heart within--that old Adam of yours that is 40 years old--seem too strong for that new Adam which is newly created in you? Why, you need not marvel--the old man has had time to gather up his strength--time to learn the arts of war and the new man is unaccustomed, as yet, to fight. It is true I have infant Grace in the new creature heart more strong than Hercules, who strangled serpents in his cradle. We have seen the newly-converted sinner strangling his sins, and conquering his lusts, but we cannot expect that he should always be the master of his fears, so as to overcome doubts, answer questions, and confound gainsayers! No, young Christian, trust in the Lord your God, for you shall go from strength to strength, until in Zion you shall appear before God.

I meet with many young Christians who are greatly troubled because they

have not reached the attainments of older converts. Do you expect children to carry heavy burdens, or to be skillful in the arts, or learned in the sciences? No! We wait for riper years and greater maturity, and we expect but little from the boy at school. Even so in babes in Grace--it were an idle folly to look for the attainment of the perfect man in Christ Jesus! Some Christians, as the old Puritan says, are born with beards. Some young Christians get experience very early, and God calls them to hard fights, and great enterprises while they are yet but lambs--but our Master does not usually make captains of His drummer boys. No, no! He picks the man for the place--He will have his veterans for the front ranks, and put lads behind for a little while.

Yet sometimes they step forward and, like David, bring down Goliath. And occasionally the babes and sucklings have accomplished greater works than the veteran saints, yet that is not the rule, nor must you sigh and cry if the young Kingdom of Grace in your soul is as yet apparently weak, and sometimes appears to tremble in the scales.

III. And now another parallel. Let us remark that David was weak only in the flesh, and that the Christian is truly only weak there, too. Why was David weak? "Because," he said, "the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me. Icannot subdue them; I cannot keep them under; I cannot manage any kingdom while such turbulent spirits as these interfere and intermeddle with everything." Ah, David, and did you not know this before? How different is this from your language when you were but a lad! Did not the Philistine say to you, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the fowls of Heaven." Did you know yourself to be weak then?. And yet you said, "You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." Ah, what a fall is there, David! Ought you not now to have said the same? "Joab, I come to you in

the name of the Lord God of Hosts, and though all the hosts of Israel are at your beck and command, I will do equal justice to strong and weak, and your murderous spirit shall die and suffer because of what you have done in this, my kingdom." Oh, that David's virgin throne should have been stained with the unavenged blood of a murdered man! Here was lack of faith, you see. David had as strong a God as ever; but he was weak in the flesh. And that, my Brothers and Sisters, blessed be God, is the only weakness a Christian can know! We are never weak in our God--we are always weak in ourselves! Whenever you are in the midst of a difficulty, and you sit down and say, "I cannot do this," who ever thought you could? You ought to have known that you could do nothing! But if your difficulty is ever so severe, and your position ever so trying, is the Everlasting Arm too weak for your defense? Is the Eternal Eye unable to see through the difficulty? Or has Eternal Love failed you? "Oh, but I am so weak!" Of course you are! And the weaker you are the better! But Jehovah is not weak; the Eternal One faints not, neither is He weary; there is no searching of His understanding. David was weak because he lived by sight; if he had lived as in the days of his youth, by faith in the Covenant God who had anointed him, he never would have complained of weakness, but would have done his duty, even should Heaven itself totter about his ears!

Christian, have done today with talking of what you are, and of what you are not! Remember the Christian's standing is not on the shifting sand of creature weakness, but on the immovable rock of Divine confidence! The reason why the Church of these days is such a poor trembling thing is because she always looks to man, and seldom looks to God. If the world is to be evangelized, we examine our funds; we look down the lists of our subscribers; we count our missionaries. Oh, if we counted and reckoned on our God, and looked first and only to Him, we

might yet say to dead nations, "Live," and the voice of faith would make them live! And means, apparently inadequate, would soon suffice--if once our faith sufficed to challenge, and to plead the promises of our God! I am sure of this, my Brothers and Sisters, that there are very few Christians on the face of the earth who live by faith as they should. Yea, we are all at times pestered with that leprosy of the flesh, that looking to means, to circumstances, to that which is before our eyes, instead of ever seeing that which is invisible, and resting on that mighty arm which, when we cannot see it, is still at work, and which, when we cannot feel it, still feels for us and upholds all things by its power!

IV. I said that we were weak only in the flesh, and now I want you to observe in the fourth place, that it is where the flesh is strong that we are weak Why was not David strong? Why, because of the sons of Zeruiah, yet these sons of Zeruiah were his greatest strength! What could he have done without Joab and Abishai--Joab the man who smote the garrison of Jebus, and Abishai who slew 300 men in single-handed fight? What could he do without these? These were David's mighty men, those who always led the van, and with a tremendous shout dashed among the Philistines and scattered the uncircumcised! These were David's glory! Often, I do not doubt, as he walked in the midst of his companions in Engedi, he would look on Joab and Abishai and say, "What noble helpers! What men! How trained in the daring deeds of war! With feet leaping from crag to crag like the wild roe--with eyes piercing through the cloud of the battle--with arms whose crash is as the tempest, with faces terrible as lions making the stout-hearted tremble!" These were David's pride, his glory, his strength, yes, and they were his weakness. So is it with us. Whatever is our strength in the flesh is sure to be our weakness in the spirit.

Let me give you an instance. Jacob was a man whose strength was in his cunning. He was a wise business man; he was a shrewd calculator; he was wise as the children of this generation. Yes, but that cunning was Jacob's weakness! It was that which always brought him into trouble. He is cunning, first of all, with his poor old father Isaac. Instead of leaving the matter to God, he must deceive his father with a lie--and as the result of it, he is driven from the house of which otherwise he would doubtless, by the Divine will--have become a peaceful possessor. He goes to Laban. Here, no doubt, he looked well to himself in the bargain about Rachel, and as he did not trust his father-in-law, his father-in-law did not trust him--and Jacob finds Leah instead of the beloved one! Then it comes to the point of wages, and Jacob is very wise there. Laban is hard with him, and then he is very crafty with Laban. Laban first says he shall have the ring-streaked sheep, and then those rods in the drinking trough show what a wise man Jacob was. His visages are changed, and changed and changed again, but Jacob outwits Laban. The whole history of that good man is of one strong in his wits, but weak in his faith--always a supplanter and, therefore, being always supplanted! Thus the wisdom of man is rather an impediment than an assistant to the purpose of God. Whenever we are raised up by God to do any work for Him, we must not sit down and say, "Well I think I am qualified for the work, because I have such-and-such gifts." It is just these very things which you possess which will be the heavy hindrances, and not the successful assistants of your labor! Remember that your sons of Zeruiah will be hard to manage. They will be too strong for you!

Our Welsh Brothers are the best men in the world for preachers, qualified by God for it by their fiery spirit, and yet if you were to mark the career of many a minister with a fiery spirit, it is just that

which causes him to make shipwreck of his church by quarrels and divisions! A Scot Brother is qualified for theological studies by the coolness of his temperament, and yet it will often happen that that very coolness often palsies his life, and cripples him as a minister of the Word. I believe the strength of God's ministers generally lies in the points where they are the weakest, and their weakness usually lies in their strength. That is to say, natural strength will be toned down by a spiritual weakness, and a natural weakness will be exalted and be made the vehicle and channel for spiritual'strength! It has often been so. The very physical appearance of Paul, his personal presence which was said to be weak and contemptible, becomes to him the subject of glorying; he glories in his infirmity, for it is the means of giving honor to God.

"This is strange logic," says one. It is, Sir--God's logic is strange! Gideon fears the Midianites because of the slender number of his soldiers, but the Lord says, "The people are yet too many for Me." The king of Judah, on another occasion, hires for so many hundred thousand talents, a number of mercenary troops from the king of Israel. "Now," he says, "I shall win the battle." But before the battle begins, the Prophet bids him send these men back; God can do better without means than He can with means who are audacious enough to think themselves necessary! The Lord will always throw the sword away from His hand when that sword begins to boast itself! Assyria is His axe to cut down the cedars, but if the axe glories, the axe itself must be cast away! And so will it be with you if you set down any good thing you have ever done, to yourself--God will bring you down! Learn instead to be wise, and if you have any excellence or any power, pour contempt on it; and if you have any weakness, and any infirmity, glory in it because the power of God shall rest upon you!

V. And now one other remark. and may God bless the Word to the comfort of all His people. It is this. We are anointed kings, and yet we are weak; but our weakness shall not prevent our reigning by-and-by. David's kingdom did not shake, even when his heart failed him; and it would have stood just as fast if he had knocked away Joab and Abishai who seemed to be the props that supported it. God had sworn that David should sit upon the throne--David's strength lay in God's truthfulness, not in Joab's valor. It was David's business to believe that come what may, God's purpose must stand, and God would do all His pleasure. It is just the same with you, Christian, today. However weak you may be, and whatever means may have failed you, remember God has said it--you shall be saved! He has promised that you shall be glorified with Christ; and so you must be, come fair, come foul. Whatever happens, God must be as good as His Word. There are some professed Christians who believe that God's people may fall away and perish everlastingly. I don't know whether they think it is the weak Christian or the strong; but they believe that there are some who, though they serve
God for years, may yet in a dark and evil hour forsake the Lord their God, and may ultimately be cast away. Brothers and Sisters, we reject, renounce and abhor that doctrine, as being not the truth of God, but an insinuation of Satan! We believe that every child of God, from the least to the greatest; every man, woman, or child who has put his trust in Jesus, is as safe now from finally perishing as though he were in Heaven! We uphold and teach, and it is our joy to believe, that all who have given themselves to Christ, and who have been saved by His love, shall be kept safely in the hour of temptation, and presented at last without spot or wrinkle or any such thing before His Father's face!
It is on this Doctrine I am about to dwell a minute, while I say that we shall reign. Weak as we are, we shall reign in Heaven, by-and-by,

and I shall attempt to show you why. For, in the first place, if we do not, God's attributes will, every one of them, suffer an eclipse! Where is the power of God, if He cannot keep the people whom He has bought with His blood, and whom He has called by His Spirit? Is the power of sin greater than the power of God? And is man's free will to be Omnipotent, and God's purpose to fail, because men will not let Godsucceed? I say that God's Omnipotence would be blotted and blurred if He suffered the very meanest of His chosen ones to fall away and perish! Or where were His lovee If Christ can keep His spouse and does not, where is His affection? If Jesus can save His people and will not where is His love and what is its vaunted value? It is either in God's power to keep a man from going down to Hell, or it is not--if it is not, then God is not Omnipotent; if it is in His power, but not in His love, His love--I say it with reverence to His name--is not the everlasting love of which Scripture says so much! And then, His wisdom, too--would not that suffer? If His anointed sons shall not reign, why did He anoint them? Why does a wise God begin a work He does not carry on? Has God purposed anything which He finds to be an error and, therefore, forbears to execute it? God forbid we should indulge such blasphemy! And where, my Brothers and Sisters, where is Divine Truth? What truth would there be in a passage like this--"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands." If one of them should perish, that passage were not true! And again, those words of the Apostle Paul--"If when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of His Son, how much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life?" Where would the reasoning be there? Where is the Truth of God in those statements, if His people are not saved by Jesus' life? Then the Apostle Paul was deceived when he said, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor

life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then God did not mean it when He said, "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of My love shall not be removed, says the Lord who has mercy upon you." Where is the meaning of that Divine assurance--"Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." I say, Beloved, that the Bible is like the husks of the winepress when the generous juice has been pressed from there, if you take the Doctrine of Final Perseverance out of it. If God can change, if His purpose can fail, if His love can be taken away from one on whom it was ever set, I am not a Christian, nor would I think it my boast, and my honor to serve God, if he were such a faithless one as this free-will theology makes Him to be! But further than this, if all for whom Jesus shed His blood, and all who believe in God through Jesus is not saved, then God's Son is dishonored! He is the Head, but He is the Head of a mangled body; He is a king, but He is like the king of Naples, a king without a territory; He is a Husband, but He is a Husband without a spouse, or with a spouse that is only half there, half His, and half the devil's! And then again, if God's people are not saved, and if His Davids do not reign, then you have to accept the blasphemous alternative that God is defeated by man! Here it is--God wills to save me, but I am told that my free will may master God! Away with your free will! Is free will to be God? If it is a god, fall down and worship it, and be an idolater as base as the worshippers of Baal! But I know that God is Master of man, and that man's will shall never match with God, but God will have His way! I ask now, in the name of reason, and of Scripture, what is there

that can hinder God from saving the man whom He has promised to save? "Why, his hard heart can hinder him!" Yes, but he had that hard heart when God began with him, and God overcame that bad heart, and can He not overcome it to the end? "Oh, but the man may not be willing!" Yes and he was not willing at the first, but God made him willing, and He that mastered his will, then--may He not still master it? "Oh, but Satan may overcome him!" And is Satan to make the purpose of God of no effect? And is a child of God to be a child of Hell tomorrow--alive today, dead tomorrow, and then alive again? O miserable doctrine! Where is now our strong consolation if this is our portion?

In presenting such as the everlasting Gospel, I feel confidence, because it is worth your having. Trust your souls with Christ today, and you are saved! "He who believes on Christ Jesus shall be saved." "No," say our antagonists, "he shall not. He may be, or he may not be; he may believe on Christ, but whether he is saved or not depends upon his own will." Sir, you lie against God and Scripture! "He who believes shall be saved," come what may. " Yes, if he keeps on believing." Sir, it says no such thing! It says, "He who believes shall be saved"--he shall, he must, keep on believing! Where God begins the work, He will carry it on. Let me quote again that passage--"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands." "Ah," said a foolish minister once, "but they may pluck themselves out!" A pretty idea! "No man shall pluck them out of His hands," and they may pluck themselves out as if they were not men! Or, says another, they may slip between His fingers. But then what becomes of that passage, "They shall never perish?" If one of His sheep shall ever perish, that Word of God is either false, or else had no meaning in it!

I was riding lately with a good Brother in Christ who did not believe

in Final Perseverance. He said, "I don't believe that many Christians ever fall away. I don't think one in a thousand does, perhaps not one in a million, but it is possible, just possible, and I think we ought to say it is." "But," I said, "one in a million does not improve your case at all! Because if one in a million, why not you? Why not me? Why not the rest? Why not all? If some for whom Christ died may perish, why not all? And then a Christian may die and never 'see of the travail of his soul.' If some who believe may fall away and perish, why not all? Then how shall the promise stand if they believe and yet were not saved? If Christ may lose a part of His Church, why may He not lose all? Besides," I said, "I should feel that if one child of God may fall, certainly it must be me; but why should one fall more than another?" My friend said, "Because one is more wicked than another." "What is this but the old Covenant of Works? Their standing depends not on themselves, but on God. How shall they be prevented from falling?" "By God's Grace, I suppose." "Well, then, if God's Grace can keep one, it can keep another! And if it cannot keep one Christian from going into sin, how am I to hope it will keep another? And if some Christians persevere, and come to Heaven, why may not others? What is the reason why?" "Because some are better than others." "Then off with the crown from Jesus' head and put it on the head of the Law, and sing 'Hallelujah,' to our good works after all."

No, my Brothers and Sisters. When your soul is given up to Christ, it is Christ's business to save it, not yours! When you have committed yourself into Jesus' hands--

"His honor is engaged to save The meanest of His sheep; All that His heavenly Father gave, His hands securely keep! Nor death nor Hell shall ever divide His darlings from His breast; In the dear bosom of His love They must forever rest."

Fly into His bosom, Sinner--fly now, and you shall rest there forever! And neither sin, nor Satan, nor self, shall ever pluck you thence; for he who believes is saved! He who believes in Christ, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The water which He shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life! God grant you the blessing of perseverance, for Jesus' sake!

Chapter 46

A Single Eye And Simple Faith

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING,SEPTEMBER 16, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness."

Matthew 6:22,23.

THIS sentence has in it the nature of a Proverb. It is well worthy of frequent quotation, as it is applicable to such various circumstances. It is one of the most pithy, terse utterances of our Savior. So full of meaning is, it that it would be utterly impossible for us to draw out all its analogies. It is capable of adaptation to so many different things that the ablest commentators despair of being able to give you the whole of its fullness. But mark--very much of the meaning is to be discovered by the use--as the varieties of our personal experience furnish varieties of practical reflection. For example, we may interpret the passage of conscience as the eye of the soul--conscience must be clear and simple. If the conscience, which is the candle of the Lord, and which searches the secret parts of the belly, is not light but darkness, how great must be the darkness! If a man has not enough conscience to know darkness from light, and light from darkness, then he puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; if that only power, on which seems to tremble some rays of the ancient light of manhood, is darkened--if the lighthouse is quenched, if the windows are sealed up--how great, indeed, must be the darkness of man! We cannot wonder, when once a man has a depraved, and seared conscience, that he willingly runs into iniquity, commits sin with both hands, and goes

from step to step till he obtains the highest seat in the scale of sin!
The symbol of the eye here may also refer to the understanding, taken in a yet broader sense than as the conscience; for, I suppose, that conscience is, after all, but the understanding exercised about moral truth. If the understanding of man is dark, how dark must be man's soul! If that which judges, and weighs, and tests--if that which is to us the teacher, the recorder of the town of Mansoul--if that is amiss, if the recorder make wrong entries, if the understanding has bad scales and uses different weights, how gross, indeed, must be the ignorance of man! What? Seal up the windows of the house? Surely the thickness of the walls will not so much keep away the light as the sealing up of the windows! Let but the understanding be enlightened, and the rays will diffuse themselves and illuminate every faculty of the whole man--but, ah, if it is darkened, man is in darkness as respects all his powers!
Yet again, the term, "eye," may also refer to the heart; for, in some sense, the heart is the eye of the soul. The affections turn the man in a certain direction, and where the affections go, the eye is turned. There is such a connection between the heart and the eye of man, that well might this text have such a reference. If the affections are pure, the man will be pure; but if the affections themselves are perverted, debased, degraded, we need not marvel that the man's whole life should be degraded, debased and filthy, too. You see the aptness of the proverb by the numerous moral truths it may serve to illustrate; but time will only allow me to take it in more than one or two aspects and may God bless what I shall have to say to all our hearts.
I shall regard our text as having to do, first, with the eye of our faith And, secondly, with the eye of our obedience.
I. First, with THE EYE OF OUR FAITH. Faith to the spiritual man is his eye. It is with that he looks to Christ-- looks unto Him whom he has

pierced and weeps for his sin. It is by faith that he walks; not by natural sight, but by the sight which is yielded to him by his spiritual eye--his faith. It is by this faith that he sees things not as yet visible to the eye of sense--realizes the unseen and beholds the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things which the natural eye cannot discern. Faith is to the Christian an eye both quick and sharp, an eye which discovers sin, an eye which discerns the Master's will, an eye which looks forward, and down a lengthy racecourse to the reward which awaits all those who so run as to receive the prize, looking unto Christ Jesus. Faith peers across the stream of death, and longs for the rest which remains for the people of God. Faith has, indeed, so sharp a vision, that it sees the glories which God has prepared for them who love Him. Faith beholds the face of the crowned Redeemer in bliss, and meekly bows before Him in adoration. Faith, then, is the eye of the Believer's soul. Any disease, therefore, in our faith will bring disease into the entire man! If our faith is weak, then the light in our entire spirit will be very hazy. He who staggers at the promise, through unbelief, will stagger in other places besides his faith; he will stagger on his knees; his hands will become weak, and his heart will often palpitate. He who can see well with the eye of faith, can do all things. If our faith is the measure of our strength, he that is strong in faith is strong to do mighty exploits. By his God shall he break through a troop; in the name of his God, shall he leap over a wall. But he who is afraid of the promise, staggering at its greatness, instead of adoring the greatness of the Giver--he who looks at the blessing, and trembles because of his unworthiness, forgetful of the graciousness of Him who gives gifts to the undeserving--he must be a weak and sorrowful man! Little-Faith is safe, but he is seldom happy. It is very rarely that Ready-to-Halt can dance upon his crutches. Miss

Much-Afraid is usually of a sorrowful countenance. But Great-Heart is a man whose face is anointed with fresh oil, and faithful is he who can look into the midst of the fires and fear not their fury! Hopeful is one that can pass through the river Jordan, itself, and cry, "Fear not, I feel the bottom and it is good."

Disease, I say, in our faith will bring disease into the whole spiritual man, and weakness here will make us weak everywhere. If our faith is also variable, if it has its uphills, and its downhills, its ebbing, and its flowing, then it will in every ebb and flow affect the whole spiritual being. When faith is in its flood-tide, the soul floats joyously above every rock--nor fears even the thought of quicksand. But when faith is at its ebb, then--though blessed be God the tide never goes so low as to wreck the vessel--yet sometimes she seems to bump upon the sands, or the rocks grate against her keel. It is hard sailing with Little-Faith; it is difficult traveling on the road to Heaven when faith varies and is unstable as water. That Christian cannot excel whose faith is of an inconstant character. But, my Brothers and Sisters, there is one disease of faith which will not merely bring disease into the soul, but positive death! There is one sickness of our faith which is mortal--which must bring the man who labors under it inevitably to destruction--and that is a lack of singleness in our faith, the lack of simplicity in it. He who has two grounds of trust is lost! He who relies upon two salvations, and cannot say of Christ, "He is all my salvation and all my desire," that man is not only in danger of being lost, but he is already condemned; because, in fact, he believes not on the Son of God! He is not alive to God at all, but rests partly on the Cross, and then in some measure on something else. He only is the quickened and living child of God whose faith is "fixed on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

It is with this disease of faith I have to deal this morning. Be it so, that the light of your body is the eye of your faith, therefore when your eye is good, when you see but one objective and look unto Jesus, alone, your whole body will be full of light. There shall be the light of peace and joy in Christ Jesus. But if your eye is evil, and it must be evil if it is not good, if it is divided between two objects, know that your whole body shall be full of darkness! Doubt and despondency shall cast its thick shadows over you now, and worse, you shall be presently overtaken with the Egyptian darkness of despair, when God shall cast you away. For hear me, you who are trusting to two things--trusting partly in Christ, and partly in your good works, or in ceremonies, or in almsgiving, or in prayer, or in your experience, or your doctrinal knowledge--all or any of these as objects of confidence do but treacherously cast a slur upon the name of Jesus, the Savior of men! What, Sirs? And is not Jesus able enough to save with His own right hand, that you must come and seek some assistance for Him? Why, Man, you make Him to be less than Omnipotent, for Omnipotence can do all things without assistance! And yet you would meddle with Him, and think that He has not might enough to save, unless you shall supplement His strength by the addition of your own! What would have been said to the brightest angel if he had stepped forward with impertinent audacity to assist His Maker in the creation of the world? Or, what would be said of Gabriel, himself, if he should offer to bend his shoulders, that he might assist the Eternal One in bearing up earth's huge pillars and sustaining the arches of Heaven? Surely, such impertinence would be punished with the direst doom! And yet were his sin less blasphemous than yours; you who think Christ's blood is not enough to ransom you, and you must bring your own gold and silver and precious stones? What have I said? No, you must bring your dross and dung to eke out the

Savior's redemption. You say His Cross is not high enough, and the transverse beam not broad enough to bear you up, and lift you up to Heaven! And so you would add your puny strength to the strength of Him who is God's equal, who is the eternal God, Himself, though He bear our sins in His own body on the tree! Oh, Soul, have done with such pride, I pray you; for such pride must sink you lower than the lowest Hell! It was by less pride than this that Satan fell, and surely you will not escape! Christ will never let you enter Heaven while you blot, and blur, and stain, and smear the escutcheon of His Omnipotence. Be done, then, with seeking to have two objects for your trust!

Besides, let me ask you now with whom it is that you would yoke the Son of God? Are you about to yoke Him to yourself? Shall the eternal God plow with you, a puny worm, a creature of today--one who knows nothing, who is and yet is not--who is gone before the breath of the morning gale? What? Would you yoke Leviathan with a worm, or seek to put a gnat to the chariot with an elephant? If you did, the disparity would not so shut out every semblance of reason as to put yourself in conjunction with Jehovah's Christ! To yoke an angel with a fly were absurd enough, but to put yourself side by side with the Lord's Anointed--that you may do a part, and He may do the rest--oh Man, be not so mad! Let go of the absurd idea, and know that Jesus is Savior alone--He will have no helper, no compeer, no assistant--He will do all, or He will do nothing, for when you put another with Him, you do dishonor and degrade Him. Is your Baptism to assist His blood? Drops of water on an infant's brow to save its soul? Or a bath in which you are immersed to help you wash away sins which no mortal's blood could purge? What? And is the eating of bread and wine to be the means of saving a soul because Christ's own flesh and blood could not suffice to save? I love both of these sacred ordinances, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but if you

bring them as part-saviors and rest on them, I say, away with them! Away with them! Away with them! An antichrist, even when made of gold, is as damnable an antichrist as when made of dross! And even God's own ordinances, if they are put as helpers to Christ, or if observed with a sense of merit, must be met with the cry, "Away with them! Away with them!" They cannot save, and they may destroy. "He who eats and drinks unworthily"--and he does so who trusts to them--"eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." They may condemn! They cannotsave apart from Christ.

And will you add your almsgiving to Christ? What? And is your paltry dirt to buy a Heaven which Christ's blood is not enough to buy? What? And will you add your prayers? Are your prayers to have a merit in them which His strong crying, and tears have not already? Pray earnestly and constantly, I beseech you! Give of your alms abundantly! But, oh, rest not in these things, for good as they are, they will certainly exclude you from Heaven, if they in any measure whatever are a part of the foundation of your hope!--

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus, Can do helpless sinners good." Oh, you whose eye is not good, let me remind you of another thing. Do you not know, O Man, that your idea of mixing your merits, or your doings up with Christ, betrays an utter ignorance of what you are, and of what your good works are? Your good works are stained with sin! Your best performances need to be washed in blood! When you have prayed, you have need to ask forgiveness for your prayer! Though you should give your body to be burned, and spend your whole life in the service of Christ, yet at last you will have to confess you were but an unprofitable servant; you will have to be saved by Divine Grace, or not at all! It is your ignorance, Man, that makes you think you can help Christ, for you are naked and poor and miserable! You may chink your counterfeit

merits in your hand and say, "I am rich and increased in goods;" you may look upon your spangled cobweb robe, and say, as the dew drops hang on it, "I am adorned with diamonds, and clad in needlework and fine linen." But ah, Soul, it is but a spider web, and only your ignorance makes you think otherwise. Oh that God the Holy Spirit may enlighten you! That eye which sees anything good in the creature is a blind eye; that eye which fancies it can discern anything in man, or anything in anything he can do to win the Divine favor, is as yet stone blind to the Truth of God, and needs to be lanced and cut, and the cataract of pride removed from it!

Yet, again, O Sinner, you say, "My merits and my doings will help Christ." Why, Man, is not this contrary to all precedent? Who has helped Christ as yet? When He stood in the Eternal Council with His Father, who gave Him wisdom? Who was prompter to our Divine Representative, and put words of wisdom on His lips? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him? Did He not ordain the Covenant alone? And when He came to build the heavens, and arch the skies, were you with Him? When He laid the pillars of earth, when He weighed the clouds in scales, and the hills in balances, were any there who were His counselors? Were you one of the king's Cabinet? Oh, you audacious worm! To counsel Him, and to help Him in Redemption, when you could not help Him in the planning of Redemption, nor in His Creation work? Who was with Him when He routed the enemies of His people, and redeemed their souls with blood? Hear Him--"I have trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none." The blood upon His garment is His own blood, not the blood of any of His fellow comrades! His disciples forsook Him and fled; He looked, and there was no man--He wondered that there was no man to save. His own arm brought salvation, and it is His own righteousness which upheld Him! And do you think after He has

fought the battle alone, that He needs you to be His ally and save you? Does He need your strength to back up His eternal might? Stand back, and lay your finger upon your mouth, and say, "Lord I am vile! You have finished the work which Your Father gave You to do, and I cannot interfere. You have done it! You have done it all, and I accept Your finished righteousness, Your complete redemption. I am willing to be anything, that You may be All-in-All. I take Your Grace as a free gift; I come to You naked to be clothed, helpless to be helped, dead to be made alive! I come to Your merit without presence of any; I come, although without any fitness, without any qualification, with a hard heart, with a stubborn will, yet I come to You just as I am! Lord, do the work from beginning to end; work in me to will and to do of Your good pleasure, and then help me to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling."

Sinner, with divided hope, a solemn thought I have to suggest to you on the terribleness of your delusion. Remember, if you trust in any measure to your works, you are under the Law, and as many as are under the Law are under the curse! Oh, what multitudes of professed Christians might be thundered at by that text! It is true they would not say that they hoped to be saved by legal works; but then they hope to be saved by certain works which they regard as being the works of the Christian dispensation! Now, remember, we speak not of three Covenants, but only two! One is the Covenant of Works. If any man is to be saved by that, he must keep the Covenant and never break it; but inasmuch as every man has already broken it, whoever is under that Covenant is accursed. He is accursed by the Law of God! The Ten great Commandments utter ten solemn curses upon him! The other Covenant is a Covenant of Grace. There is no covenant half of works, and half of Grace. The Covenant of Grace is a Covenant of free gift, in which

Christ gives to all those who willingly receive, but asks nothing of them. Albeit, afterwards He works in them all, that His Spirit loves and makes them to serve Him out of gratitude; not that they may be saved, but because they are saved; not to win salvation, but because they have obtained it, and wish to let that salvation manifest and develop itself in all their daily acts. Many professing Christians, I believe, imagine that there is a remedial covenant, a sort of sincere obedience covenant, in which if a man does as much as he can, he will be saved by that. Oh, Sinner, God will never take a composition of you! There is no court of heavenly bankruptcy where so much in the pound may be accepted, and the debtor then discharged! It is all or none! If you come to pay, it must be to the uttermost farthing. Agree with your Adversary quickly, therefore, and take the receipt of your debt freely from His loving hands--for if not, and you attempt to pay, you shall never be let out of prison until all is paid--and that will never be, though you swelter in the pains of Hell forever and ever!

I know that people labor under the idea that going to Church and Chapel, taking the Sacrament, and doing certain good deeds that pertain to a respectable profession of religion, are the way to Heaven. It is the way to Hell, believe me! Although it is strewn with clean gravel, and there are grassy paths on either side, it is not the road to Heaven for all that. You know how I have insisted in reading the Chapter this morning, upon the certainty of good works. I have told you that it is only by this, that you can be known, and that you are not Christians unless you produce good works. But at the same time, Beloved, if you rest on anything butChrist, or on anything with Christ--if you try to prop up His Grace--if you try to add to the perfect robe of His righteousness--you are under the Law, and you are under the curse! And you shall find that curse in the daily trembling of your conscience,

and meet with it in its fullness at the awful Day of God, when the Lord shall curse every soul who is under it!

But one more remark, and I will leave this point of the singleness of the eye of faith. If you can be saved by two things, then the glory will be divided! A quaint minister once said if sinners went to Heaven of their own works, and their own will, they would throw up their caps and say, "glory be unto myself--men would take the honor and certainly the praise, if they contributed any part to their own salvation! The song would not be, "Unto Him who loved us," but, "unto Him and myself," or, "with my works and my merits." Do you think, Sirs, that Christ died to win divided homage, and share a divided throne? Did He come from Heaven's highest glories, and stoop to the Cross of deepest woe, that His name might be sung in conjunction with yourpoor name? Oh, no! God forbid that we should indulge in so profane a thought! He must be ALL! He must have all the crown, and every jewel in it shall be His own. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the honor, and glory, and majesty, forever and ever." Every syllable of every song; every shout of every angel; every cry of every redeemed one must bear the same sacred burden and must rise up to the same Divine Throne! And we ought, we must, go bow and ascribe to Him, and Him, only, "Glory, honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might, forever and ever. Amen." Bear with this word of exhortation--poor Sinners, trust Jesus Christ now! Just as you are, come to Him now! Bring nothing with you, come empty handed! Robe not yourself, come naked! Wash not yourself, come filthy! Seek not to soften your heart, come with it, hard as it is. Try not to get a little comfort--come despairingly. You can come no way else; but come now to His Cross! He was naked when He bought you, and you must be naked when He wins you; He was in shame when He served for you, and you must be ashamed when He shows His love

to you. He drank the wormwood when He redeemed you, and if the wormwood of despair is in your mouth, yet come to Him now, and say to Him now, "Heal my backslidings, receive me graciously, and love me freely." And when you have said it, "venture on Him, venture wholly." Throw your arms about His Cross, and be this the spirit of your faith--"sink or swim, here I must abide. I know I perish if I withdraw; I cannot perish here. Jesus, let Your pitying eyes look down on me! I do believe, I will believe that You have power to save even me! I trust You with my all forever."

If you can say that, Sinner, then you are saved, your sins are forgiven you--go in peace! Take up your bed and walk, you palsied one! "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I bid you stretch out your hand, you with the withered arm." Awake, arise and live! He who believes is justified from all things. Your sins are gone; your soul is accepted. You are saved this morning, and you shall see His face and sing His love in Glory everlasting!

II. Now I come to my second point.

It is a fact, that to obey and to believe is in the sacred language very much the same, so that truly to believe Christ is to give security for a willing obedience. As soon as ever we believe Him, we obey Him. In fact, Christ does not promise to save us if we disobey His laws. But His promise is this--if we trust Him, He will save us. But then He has His way of saving us, and He will only save us in His own way! And if we really trust Him, we shall yield to His ways, and be willing to be obedient to His commands. The eye of obedience, however, sometimes in the Christian is not good--I mean in the profssedChristian! That word has been so dishonored that I often use it without meaning the true child of God. And sad that I should be compelled too often to apply the term, "Christian," to those who are not of Christ, and who have never

learned His love nor have known His name. There are many professors whose eye of obedience is not single. They live in this world, they say, "for Christ," but really no one can believe them. If you can judge them by their fruits, they seem to live for almost any other objective than Christ! At any rate, if they do give Jesus their allegiance, they seem to give Him but half their heart, and serve Him with a love that is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. Sometimes they are zealous for Jesus, and at other times just as eager after the things of this world. No, I must confess that even true Christians do not always keep the eye good--the speck gets into it, if not the beam. And there are times when even God's minister has to bow his knee, and with bitter weeping, to confess that he cannot keep his motives always good. I have often to mourn over this myself. I can say from my inmost heart that I love my Master's cause, but I have to ask myself this, "Do not you love to see your Master's cause prosper by you, more than by another?" Oh that wicked thought, that ever it should cross our hearts! And yet, what minister of Christ is there who has not to confess it, if he but examine himself? I do feel that when we are in our right state, we would as soon souls were saved by anybody else, as ourselves, and that God should bless another as us; for it can make no difference to us, if we really love the Master--who it is by whom He honors Himself! Our honor, our standing, ought to be less than nothing--yet it will creep up. One serves Christ at times very earnestly, but then gets the fly into the sweet pot of ointment--the wishing to serve Christ that self may share in the pleasure of doing good! We must be content to do good, and have no self-gratification to indulge--content to serve Christ and know no reward--content to serve our generation, though our names should be cast out. We must be content, though we should only hope to hear the, "Well done," when we shall be in our Master's Presence.

Well, now, let me say a few things about having a good eye. Professors, I speak to you at large, whether you are Christians or not. Get rid of that evil eye which looks asquint and crossways--looking one way at the world, and the other way at the Cross--not straight forward at any object, but is turned here, and there, and everywhere! Remember, this is the worldling's eye; the worldling thinks he can serve God and Mammon, and will you think the same, you professed follower of Christ? Will you try to serve two masters who are at deadly enmity to one another? I tell you, Man, when God will say to you, "Take no thought for the morrow, be careful for nothing"--Mammon will say to you, "Look ahead, be careful about everything." And when God says to you, "Give of your substance to the poor;" Mammon will say, "Hold it tight, it is that giving that spoils everything." And when God will say unto you, "Set not your affections on the things of earth;" Mammon will say, "Get money, get money, get it any way you can!" And when God says, "Be upright," Mammon will say, "Cheat your own father if you can win by it!" Mammon and God are at such extreme ends of the earth, and so desperately opposed, that I trust, Christian, you are not such a fool, such an arrant fool as to attempt to serve them both! If you do you have the worldling's eye, and you are a worldling yourself, remember, too, if you try to do this, we may suspect you of having the hypocrite's eye! As Matthew Henry says, "The hypocrite is like the waterman. He pulls this way, but he looks that. He pretends to look to Heaven, but he pulls towards his own interest. He says he looks to Christ, but he is always pulling towards his own private advantage. The true Christian, however, is like a traveler; he looks to the goal, and then he walks right straight on to it; he goes the way he is looking." Be not like the hypocrite, who has this double eye, looking one way and going the other. An old Puritan said, "A hypocrite is like the

hawk--the hawk flies upward, but he always keeps his eyes down on the prey. Let him get up as high as he will, he is always looking on the ground. Whereas, the Christian is like the lark, he turns his eyes up to Heaven, and as he mounts and sings, he looks upward and he mounts upward." Be one of God's own larks; be an honest lark, looking and going in the same direction with a single purpose, for your double purpose will make the world suspect you of hypocrisy!

Yet further--remember, Christian, unless you have a good eye, your usefulness will be entirely ruined. This has been the spiritual death of many a man, who bade fair to do good in the world, but who did not live with one objective. I have known ministers preach a sermon in which they wished to profit all, but they wished to please the deacon in the green pew, too, and the sermon fell dead to the ground. We have known men too anxious to win sinners, but at the same time they were equally anxious that they should be thought well of in their oratory, so that they should not say a course rough word, for fear of degrading their standing among the eloquent of the age. It is all over with the usefulness of such! A Christian minister, above every man, must have no objective in life but to glorify his God, and whether it is fair weather or foul weather, it should be nothing to him. He should be a man who looks for fights, and expects storms--and in proportion to his faithfulness, he will be sure to meet with both. He must be one who girds up his loins, and makes ready for the battle. Let him understand it is to be battle--and make no preparation for the flesh. And, Christian, if you would do good in this world, you must live for that simple objective, and not live for anything else. If you run after two objectives, you will not come upon either, or rather, the world will get the mastery over you! When Christians have two aims, they are like two rivers which flow near the city of Geneva, the Arve and the Rhone.

The Rhone comes flowing along, a beautiful blue--a blue which painters give to Italian skies and to the rivers of Switzerland. It is no exaggeration that they are as blue as they are painted! The Arve comes down from the glacier, a chalky, dirty white. I stood sometime ago at the place where these two rivers join. It was not long before the Arve had quenched the Rhone; all that beautiful blue had fled away, and nothing but white was seen! "Evil communications corrupt good manners." If your life is made up of two streams, worldliness running in like the Arve, and you hope to have spirituality running in like the blue Rhone, you will soon be mistaken! Your spirituality, if their is such a thing, will become a stalking horse to your worldliness; your religion will be swallowed up, for you cannot serve two masters--you cannot serve either of them well, and you cannot serve Christ at all--if you are divided in your aims.

And then, further than this, Christian, do you not know that if you have divided aims, you will be an object of contempt to the world? The world comes to despise the Church at this very period because she perceives that the Church is not chaste to her husband, Christ. Ah, I love not to say what I am going to say, but really, when I have looked on some professing Christians, a thought I do not like to indulge has crossed my mind! I have seen them so worldly, so sharp in their business, so mingled with the world, that you could not tell which was worldling and which was Christian! And I have thought, did Christ shed His blood to make such a thing as this? Is the only thing that Christ's Redemption can produce, a thing no better than Nature can bring forth? I have seen worldly men better than such Christians, in many virtues excelling them. And I have thought, "What? Is it worth while making all this noise about a Redemption that does not redeem these men any more than this, but leaves them slaves to the world?" And I have looked at

them, and the tears have been in my eyes as I have thought, "Is this the Holy Spirit's work? Was there any Holy Spirit necessary here at all? Would they not be as good men without the Holy Spirit, as they seem to be with Him? Is this the best thing Heaven can produce? Has Heaven been in labor and brought forth this mouse? Is this all the Gospel has to give?" Now, judge you, whether I am not warranted in such thoughts; and if they cross my mind, think how often such thoughts must flit across the mind of the worldling! "Oh," says he, "this is your religion, is it? Well, it is not such a mighty thing, after all. I bought such goods at such a shop, and I was fairly taken in. This is your Christianity, is it?" "I worked for such a master," says another, "he is a deacon, he is a skinflint, too. This is your Christianity!" "Ah," says a laborer, "I am employed by So-and-So, and he is just as proud and domineering in his behavior to his workmen as if he were a Pharaoh, and not a follower of Christ. This is your Christianity, is it?" Indeed, the worldling has good grounds for saying something like it! How has the fine gold become dim! How has the glory departed! The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold--how have they become as earthen pitchers--the work of the hands of the potter! Oh Zion! Your Nazarites were purer than snow; they were whiter than milk; but their face is become black as coal, and their skin is tarnished with mire! Your sons lie in the corners of the street like a wild bull in the net; your strong men faint, and your valiant ones fail, because your glory is departed from you!

Would to God we were all Christians who profess to be Christians, and that we lived up to what we profess. Then would the Christian shine forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moon," and what besides--why, "amazing as an army with banners"! A consistent Church is an amazing Church--an honest, upright Church would shake the world! The tramp of

godly men is the tramp of heroes; these are the thundering legions that sweep everything before them. The men that are what they profess to be, hate the semblance of a lie--whatever shape it wears--and would sooner die than do that which is dishonest, or that which would be degrading to the glory of a Heaven-born race, and to the honor of Him by whose name they have been called! O Christians! You will be the world's contempt; you will be their despising, and hissing unless you live for one objective! I know the world will pat you on the back, and flatter you, but it will despise you all the while. When I am abused, I know what it means. I look at it in the right spirit and say, "Be it so. It is the highest compliment the world can pay me!" If I am serving my God, I must not expect to be honored of men; but if I am not serving my God, I know I shall be despised of men! So will it be with you. Get a single solitary thought in your mind, and that thought the precious love of Jesus--and go and live it out, and come what may--you will be respected though abused! They may say you are an enthusiast, a fanatic, a fool, but those names from the world are titles of praise and glory! The world does not take the trouble to nickname a man unless he is worth it. It will not give you any censure unless it trembles at you! The moment they begin to turn at bay, it is because they feel they have a man to do with. So it will be with you. Be men, each one of you; stand up for Christ, and the Word of God you believe, and the world will respect you. I met with a coachman some time ago, who said to me, "Do you know the Rev. Mr. So-and-So?" "Yes, I do know him very well," "Well," he said, "he's the sort of man I like. He's a minister, and I like him very much. I like his religion." "What sort of a religion is it?" I asked, for I was anxious to know what sort of a religion it was he could like. "Why," he said, "you see this box seat? Well, he has ridden on this box seat every day for this six months, and he's the

kind of man I like, for he has never said anything about religion all the while!" That is the sort of Christian the world likes, and that is the sort they despise! They say, "Ah, we will not speak against him, he is one of our own." And if he were to come out one day, and speak about religion, what would they say? "He does not mean it, let him alone! He was silent as a man, and when he speaks, he speaks in his official capacity." There is no respect for that man, for it is not the man in the office, but it is the office that overpowers the man for the time being! Let it not be so with you. Tread the world under your feet, and serve God with all your heart, for you may never expect to have peace in your conscience until you have turned all the idols out of your soul! Live for Christ alone, for where your consecration ends, there your peace ends, too! Christian, you can never hope to stand accepted before God, while you only serve Him with half your heart; you can never hope to enter triumphantly into Heaven when you have only used part of your manhood in the service of your Redeemer.

I speak vehemently when I come to this point. I do pray, my dear Hearers, by your hope of Heaven, by your hope to be delivered from the devouring fire, and to enter into Heaven's bliss, either serve God or Mammon! Whichever you do, do it with all your heart! But do not try to do both, because you cannot. Oh, if you are Christians, live with all your might for Christ; keep not back part of the price, like Ananias and Sapphire, but give Jesus all--

"All your goods and all your hours,
All your time and all your powers,
All you have and all you are,"

and you will be a happy, blessed, honored, useful man! Divide your allegiance, and you shall be a hissing reproach to sinners; you shall be a pain to yourself, you shall be a dishonor here, and you shall be

held up to shame and everlasting contempt when Christ shall appear in the Glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him. Charge, Christians, in the name of Christ, charge against the embattled marks of sin! But do it with one heart; break not your rank; hold not out the flag of truce to the world with one hand, and draw the sword with the other. Throw away the scabbard. Be the sworn enemies, forever, of everything that is selfish and sinful. And trusting in the precious blood of Christ, and wearing the Cross in your hearts, go forward conquering, and to conquer, making mention of your Master's name, preaching His Word and triumphing in His Grace alone!

God grant, if we must have two eyes, that they may be both clear ones, one the eye of faith wholly fixed on Christ, the other the eye of obedience equally and wholly fixed on the same objective!

Chapter 47

Struggles of Conscience

A Sermon

(No. 336)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 22nd, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

at Exeter Hall, Strand.

"How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin."--Job 13:23.

THERE ARE MANY PERSONS who long to have a deeper sense of their sinfulness, and then with a certain show of conscientious scruple, they make an excuse for the exercise of simple faith. That spiritual disease, which keeps sinners from Christ, assumes a different shape at different times. In Luther's day the precise evil under which men laboured, was this: they believed in being self-righteous, and so they supposed that they must have good works before they might trust in Christ. In our day the evil has taken another, and that a most extraordinary shape. Men have aimed at being self-righteous after quite a singular fashion; they think they must feel worse, and have a deeper conviction of sin before they may trust in Christ. Many hundreds do I meet with, who say they dare not come to Christ and trust him with their souls, because they do not feel their need of him enough; they have not sufficient contrition for their sins they have not repented as fully as they have rebelled. Brethren, it is the same evil, from the same old germ of self-righteousness, but it has taken another and I think a more crafty shape. Satan has wormed himself into many hearts under the garb of an angel of light, and he has whispered to the sinner, "Repentance is a necessary virtue; stop until you have

repented, and when you have sufficiently mortifed yourself on account of sin, then you will be fit to come to Christ, and qualified to trust and rely on him." It is with that deadly evil I want to grapple this morning. I am persuaded it is far more common than some would think. And I think I know the reason of its great commonness. In the Puritanic age, which was noted certainly for its purity of doctrine, there was also a great deal of experimental preaching, and much of it was sound and healthy. But some of it was unscriptural, because it took for its standard what the Christian felt and not what the Saviour said; the inference from a believer's experience, rather than the message which goes before any belief. That excellent man, Mr. Rogers, of Deadham, who has written some useful works, and Mr. Sheppard, who wrote The Sound Believer, Mr. Flavel, and many others, give descriptions of what a sinner must be before he may come to Christ, which actually represent what a saint is, after he has come to Christ. These good brethren have taken their own experience; what they felt before they came into light, as the standard of what every other man ought to feel before he may put his trust in Christ and hope for mercy. There were some in the Puritanic times who protested against that theology, and insisted that sinners were to be bidden to come to Christ just as they were; not with any preparation either of feeling or of doing. At the present time there are large numbers of Calvinistic ministers who are afraid to give a free invitation to sinners; they always garble Christ's invitation thus: "If you are a sensible sinner you may come;" just as if stupid sinners might not come;" and then they describe what that feeling of need is, and give such a high description of it that their hearers say, "Well, I never felt like that," and they are afraid to venture for lack of the qualification. Mark you, the brethren speak truly in some respect. They describe what a sinner does feel before he comes, but

they make a mistake in putting what a sinner does feel, as if that were what a sinner ought to feel. What the sinner feels, and what the sinner does, until he is renewed by grace, are just the very opposite of what he ought. We always get wrong when we say one Christian's experience is be measured by the Word of God; and what the sinner should feel is to be measured by what Christ commands him to feel, and not by what another sinner has felt. Comparing ourselves among ourselves, we are not wise. I do believe there are hundreds and thousands who remain in doubt and darkness, and go down to despair, because there is a description given and a preparation for Christ demanded, to which they cannot attain--a description indeed which is not true, because it is a description of what they feel after they have found Christ, and not what they must feel before they may come to him. Now, then, with all my might I come this morning to break down every barrier that keeps a soul from Christ; and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to dash the battering ram of truth against every wall that has been built up, whether by doctrinal truth or experimental truth, that keeps the sinner from Christ, who desires to come and to be saved by him.

I shall attempt to address you in the following order this morning. First, a little by way of consolation; then, a little by way of instruction; a little more upon discrimination or caution; and in the last place, a few sentences by way of exhortation.

I. First, beloved, let me speak to you who are desiring to feel more and more your sins, and whose prayer is the prayer of the text, "Lord how many are mine iniquities and my sins, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me try to COMFORT YOU. It ought to give you much solace when you recollect that the best of men have prayed this prayer before you. The better a man is, the more anxious is he to know the worst of his case. The more a man gets rid of sin and the more

he lives above his daily faults and errors, the more does he cry "Search me, O God, and know my heart; O try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Bad men do not want to know their badness; it is the good man, the man who has been renewed by grace, who is anxious to discover what is his disease, that he may have it healed. Ought it not then be to some ground of comfort to you, that your prayer is not a prayer which could come from the lips of the wicked, but a prayer which has constantly been offered by the most advanced of saints, by those who have most grown in grace. Perhaps that is a reason why it would not be offered by you, who just now can scarcely hope to be a saint at all; yet it should be a matter of sweet rejoicing that your prayer cannot be an evil one, because the "Amens" of God's people, even those who are the fathers in our Israel, go up to God with it. I am sure my aged brothers and sisters in Christ now present, can say unanimously, "That has often been my prayer, Lord let me know my iniquity and my sin; teach me how vile I am, and lead me daily to Christ Jesus that my sins may be put away."'

Let this reflection also comfort you--you never prayed like this years ago when you were a careless sinner. It was the last thing you would ever think of asking for; you did not want to know your guilt. No! you found pleasure in wickedness. Sin was a sweet morsel to you; you only wanted to be let alone that you might roll it under your tongue. If any told you of your evil, you would rather they let it alone. "Ah," said you, "what business is that of yours? no doubt I make some mistakes and am a little amiss, but I don't want to be told so." Why, the last meditation you would ever have thought of entertaining would have been a meditation upon your own criminality. When conscience did speak, you said, "Lay down, sir, be quiet!" When God's word came home sharp to

you, you tried to blunt its edge--you did not want to feel it. Now, ought it not to be some comfort that you have had such a gracious change wrought in you, that you are now longing for the very feeling which at one time you could not endure? Surely, man, the Lord must have begun a good work in you, for you would not have such wishes and desires as these unless he had put his hand to the plough, and had begun to plough the barren, dry, hard soil of your heart.

Yet further, there is another reason why you should take comfort; it is very probable you do already feel your guilt, and what you are asking for you already have in measure realized. It often happens that a man has the grace which he seeks for, and does not know he has it, because he makes a mistake as to what he should feel when he has the blessing. He has already got the boon which he asks God to give him. Let me just put it in another shape. If you are sorry because you cannot be sorry enough on account of sin, why you are already sorry. If you grieve because you cannot grieve enough, why you do grieve already. If it is a cause of repentance to you that your heart is very hard and that you cannot repent, why you do repent. My dear hearer, let me assure you for your comfort, that when you go down on your knees and say "Lord, I groan before thee, because I cannot groan; I cannot feel; Lord help me to feel;" why, you do feel, and you have got the repentance that you are asking for. At least you have got the first degree of it; you have got the mustard seed of repentance in tiny grain. Let it alone, it will grow; foster it with prayer and it will become a tree. The very grace which you are asking of God is speaking in your very prayer. It is repentance which asks God that I may repent more. It is a broken heart which asks God to break it. That is not a hard heart which says, "Lord I have a hard heart; soften my heart." It is a soft heart already. That is not a dead soul which says, "Lord I am dead, quicken me." Why, you

are quickened. That man is not dumb who says, "Lord I am dumb; make me speak." Why, he speaks already; and that man who says, "Lord I cannot feel," why, he feels already. He is a sensible sinner already. So that you are just the man that Christ calls to him. This experience of yours, which you think is just the opposite of what it ought to be, is just what it should be. Oh, be comforted in this respect. But sit not down in it; be comforted enough to make you run to Jesus now,--just as you are. I take thee, sinner, to be just the man the minister is always seeking after. When we say that Christ came that there might be drink given to the thirsty, you are just the man we mean--you are thirsty. "No," you say, "I don't feel that I am thirsty, I only wish I did." Why, that wish to feel thirsty is your thirst. You are exactly the man; you are far nearer the character than if you said "I do thirst, I have the qualification;" then, I should be afraid you had not got it." But, because you think you have it not, it is all the clearer proof that you have this qualification, if indeed there be any qualification. When I say, "Come unto Christ all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" and you say, "Oh, I don't feel heavy laden enough," why, you are the very man the text means. And when I say, "Whosoever will, let him come," and you say, "I wish I were more willing, I will to be willing, "why you are the man. It is only one of Satan's quibbles--a bit of hell's infernal logic to drive you from Christ. Be a match for Satan now, this once and say "Thou lying fiend, thou tellest me I do not feel my need of a Saviour enough. I know I feel my need; and, inasmuch as I long to feel it I do feel it. Christ bids me come to him, and I will come--now, this morning. I will trust my soul, just as it is, in the hands of him whose body hung upon the tree. Sink or swim, here I am resting on him, and clinging to him as the rock of my salvation."

Take then, these words of comfort.

II. I must now go on to my second point, and give a few words of INSTRUCTION.

And so, my hearer, you anxiously long to know how many are your iniquities and your sins; and your prayer is, "Lord, make me to know my transgression and my sin." Let me instruct thee, then as to how God will answer your prayers. God hath more than one way of answering the same prayer; and though the ways are diverse, they are all equally useful and efficacious. It sometimes happens that God answers this prayer by allowing a man to fall into more and more gross sin. At our last church meeting, a brother, in giving his experience of how he was brought to God, said he could not feel his guilt, his heart was very hard; till it happened one day he was tempted to the utterance of an untruth, and no sooner had he uttered it than he felt what a despicable creature he was to tell a lie to another. So that one sin led him to see the deceitfulness and vileness of his own heart; and from that day he never had to complain that he did not feel his guilt enough, but, on the contrary, he felt too guilty to come to Christ. I believe many a man, who has been educated morally, who has been trained up in such a way that he has never fallen into gross sin, finds it very difficult to say, "Lord, I feel myself to be a sinner." He knows he is a sinner, and he knows it as a matter of fact, but he cannot altogether feel it. And I have known men who have often envied the harlot and the drunkard, because, say they, "Had I been like them, I should feel more bitterly my sin, and should feel I was one of those whom Jesus came to save." It may be, though I could hope it may not be so, that God may suffer thee to fall into sin. God grant it may never be so; but if thou ever shouldst, thou wilt then have cause to say, "Lord, I am vile; now mine eyes sees myself; I abhor myself in dust and ashes, because of this my great sin." Or possibly, you may not actually fall into sin, but be

taken to the very verge of it. Did you ever know what it was on a sudden to be overtaken by some fiery temptation, to feel as if the strong hand of Satan had gripped you about the loins, and was pulling on, you knew not whither, nor why, nor how, but against your will, to the very verge of the precipice of some tremendous sin, and you went on and on, till, on a sudden, just as you were about to take a dive into sin, your eyes were opened, and you said, "Great God, how came I here,--I, who hate this iniquity?--I, who abhor it?--and yet my feet had almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." Then in the recoil you say, "Great God, hold thou me up, for if thou dost not hold me up, I fall indeed." Then you discover that there is inbred sin in your heart only lacking opportunity to spring out; that your soul is like a magazine of gunpowder, only needing the spark, and there shall come a terrible catastrophe; that you are full of sin, grim with iniquity and evil devices, and that it only wants opportunity and strong temptation to destroy you body and soul, and that for ever. It happens sometimes that this is the way God answers this prayer.

A second method by which the Lord answers this prayer is by opening the eyes of the soul; not so much by providence, as by the mysterious agency of the Holy Spirit. Let me tell thee, my hearer, if thou shouldst ever have thing eyes opened to see thy guilt, thou wilt find it to be the most awful sight that thou hast ever beheld. I have had as much experience of this as any man among you. For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt; thought I do not hesitate to say that those who observed my life would not have seen any extraordinary sin, yet as I looked upon myself, there was not a day in which I did not commit such gross, such outrageous sins against God, that often and often have I wished I had never been born. I know John Bunyan's experience when he said he wished he had been a frog, or a

toad, rather than a man, so guilty did he feel himself to be. You know how it is with yourselves. It is as when a housewife cleans her chamber, she looks, and there is no dust; the air is clear, and all her furniture is shining brightly. But there is a chink in the window shutter, a ray of light creeps in, and you see the dust dancing up and down, thousands of grains, in the sunbeam. It is all over the room the same, but she cannot see it only where the sunbeam comes. It is just so with us; God sends a ray of divine light into the heart, and then we see how vile and full of iniquity it is. I trust, my hearer, that your prayer may not be answered as it was in my case, by terrible conviction, awful dreams, nights of misery, and days of pain. Take care; you are praying a tremendous prayer when you are asking God to show you your wickedness. Better for you to modify your prayer, and put it thus,--"Lord, let me know enough of my iniquity to bring me to Christ; not so much as to keep me from him, not so much as to drive me to despair; but only enough to be divorced from all trust in myself, and to be led to trust in Christ alone." Otherwise, Like Moses, you may be constrained to cry out in a paroxyism of agony, "O Lord, kill me I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my wretchedness."

Still, however, the practical question recurs, and you ask me again, "Tell me how I can feel the need of my Saviour." The first advice I give you is this: Particularise your sins. Do not say "I am a sinner;" it means nothing; everybody says that. But say this, "Am I a liar? Am I a thief? Am I a drunkard? Have I had unchaste thoughts? Have I committed unclean acts? Have I in my soul often rebelled against God? Am I often angry without a cause? Have I a bad tempter? Am I covetous? Do I love this world better than the world to come? Do I neglect prayer? Do I neglect the great salvation?" Put the yourself much more

readily than by taking yourself in the gross as being a sinner. I have heard of a hypocritical old Monk who used to whine out, while he whipped his back as softly as he could, "Lord, I am a great sinner, as big a sinner as Judas;" and when some one said, "Yes that you are--you are like Judas, a vile old hypocrite," then he would say, "No I am not." Then he would go on again, "I am a great sinner." Some one would say, "You are a great sinner, you broke the first commandment;" and then he would say, "No I have not." Then when he would go on and say, "I am a great sinner," some one would say, "Yes, you have broken the second commandment," and he would say, "No I have not;" and the same with the third and the fourth, and so on right through. So it came to pass he had kept the whole ten according to his own account, and yet he went on crying he was a great sinner. The man was a hypocrite, for if he had not broken the commandments, how could he be a sinner at all? You will find it better not to dwell on your sins in the mass, but to pen them, count them over, and look at them individually, one by one. Then let me advise you next to hear a personal ministry. Sit not where the preacher preaches to you in the plural number, but where he deals with you as a man alone, by yourself. Seek out a preacher like Rowland Hill, of whom it is said that if you sat in the back seat in the gallery, you always had a notion that Mr. Hill meant you; or, that if you sat in the doorway where he could not see you, yet you were quite convinced he must know you were there, and that he was preaching right at you. I wonder indeed, if men ever could feel their sins under some ministers--genteel ministers, intellectual, respectable, who never speak to their hearers as if they did anything wrong. I say of these gentlemen what Hugh Latimer said of many ministers in his day, that they are more fit to dance a morris-dance than to deal with the souls of men. I believe there are some this day more fit to deliver smart

lectures and bring out pleasing things to soothe carnal minds, than to preach the Word of God to sinners. We want the like of John the Baptist back again, and Boanerges; we want men like Baxter to preach,

"As though they might not preach again,
As dying men to dying men."

We want men like John Berride, who have pulled the velvet out of their mouths years ago and cannot speak fine words--men that hit hard, that draw the bow and pull the arrow to its very head, and send it right home, taking deadly aim at the heart and the conscience of men, ploughing deep, hitting at the private lusts and at the open sins, not generalising but particularizing, not preaching to men in the mass but to men in the detail, not to the mob and the crowd, but to each man separately and individually. Grow not offended with the minister if he come home too close to you; remember that is his duty. And if the whip goes right round you, and stings you, thank Cod for it, be glad of it. Let me, if I sit under a ministry, sit under a man who uses the knife with me sometimes, a man who will not spare me, a man who will not flatter me. If there should be flattery anywhere, let it not be at any rate in the pulpit. He who deals with men's souls should deal with them very. plainly; the pulpit is not the place for fine words, when we have to deal with the solemnities of eternity. Take that advice, then, and listen to a personal, home-smiting ministry.

Next to that, if thou wouldst know thy sins, study much the law of God let the twentieth chapter of Exodus be often before your eyes, and take with it as a commentary, Christ's sermon, and Christ's speech when he said, "He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Understand that God's commandments mean not only what they say in words, but that they touch the thought, the heart, the imagination. Think of that sentence of

David, "Thy commandments are exceeding broad." And thus, I think, thou wilt soon come to detect the heinousness of thy sin, and the blackness of thy guilt. And if thou wouldst know still more, spend a little time in contemplating the fatal end of thy sin, shouldst thou die impenitent. Dare to look downward to that fire which must be thy eternal doom, unless Jesus Christ save thee. Be wise, sinner, and look at the harvest which thou shalt surely reap if thou sowest tares; sometimes let these words ring in thy ears, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Open thy ears and listen to the end of this text--"Where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Let such a passage as this be chewed over in your soul, "The wicked shall be cast into hell with all the nations that forget God." These solemn thoughts may help you. Such books as Allaine's Alarm, Baxter's Call to the Uncoverted, Doddridge's Rise and Progress, may have a good effect on your mind, in helping you to see the greatness of your guilt, by making you meditate upon the greatness of its punishment. But if thou wouldst have a better, and more effectual way still, I give thee one other piece of advice. Spend much of your time in thinking upon the agonies of Christ, for the guilt of thy sin is never so clearly seen anywhere as in the fact that it slew the Saviour. Think what an evil thing that must be which cost Christ his life, in order to save thee. Consider, I say, poor soul, how black must be that vileness which could only be washed out with his precious blood! how grievous those offences which could not be expiated unless his body were nailed to the tree, his side pierced, and unless he died in fever and in thirst, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Go thou to the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives, and see the Saviour in his bloody sweat! Go thou to Pilate's hall, and see him in his shameful accusations! Go thou to the hall of Herod's praetorian guard, and see

there how the mighty men set Christ at nought! And go then, last of all, to Calvary, and see that spectacle of woe, and if these do not show thee the blackness of thy sin, then nothing can. If the death of Christ do not teach thee thy need of a Saviour, then what remedy remains for a heart so hard, for a soul so blind as thine?

Thus have I given you words of instruction. Forget them not; put them into practice. Be ye not hearers only, but doers of the word.

III. And now, very briefly indeed, a few sentences by way of DISCRIMINATION.

Thou art longing, my hearer, to know thy great guilt and to feel thy need of Jesus. Take care that thou dost discriminate between the work of the Spirit and the work of the devil. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee feel thy self a sinner, but it never was his work to make thee feel that Christ could forget thee. It is the work of the Spirit to make thee repent of sin; but it is not the work of the Spirit to make thee despair of pardon; that is the devil's work. You know Satan always works by trying to counterfeit the work of the Spirit. He did so in the land of Egypt. Moses stretched out his rod and turned all the waters into blood. Out came Jannes and Jambres and by their cunning and sleight of hand, they have a large piece of water brought, and they turn that into blood. Then Moses fills the land with frogs--the ungracious sorcerers have a space cleared and they fill that with frogs; thus they opposed the work of God by pretender to do the same work; so will the devil do with thee. "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit; "Sinner thou canst not save thyself" "Ah!" says the devil, "and he cannot save thee either." "Ah!" says God the Holy Spirit "thou hast a hard heart, only Christ can soften it." "Ah!" says the devil, "but he wont soften it unless thou dost soften it first." "Ah!" says God the Spirit "thou hast no qualification, thou art naked, and ruined, and

undone." "Yes," says the devil, "it is no use your trusting Christ, because you have no good in you, and you cannot hope to be saved." "Ah!" says God the Spirit, "thou dost not feel thy sin; thou art hard to repent, because of thy hardness." "Ah!" says the devil, "and because thou art so hard-hearted Christ cannot save thee." Now do learn to distinguish between the one and the other. When a poor penitent sometimes thinks of destroying himself, do you think that is the Spirit's work? "It is the devil's work; he was a murderer from the beginning." One sinner says, "I am so guilty, I am sure I can never be pardoned." Is that the Spirit's teaching--that lie? Oh! that comes from the father of lies. Take heed, whenever you read a biography like that of John Bunyan's Grace Abounding, as you read, say, "that is the Spirit's work, Lord send me that"--"that is the devil's work, Lord keep me from that." Do not be desirous to have the devil tearing your soul to pieces; the less you have to do with him the better, and if the Holy Ghost keeps Satan from you, bless him for it. Do not wait to have the terrors and horrors that some have, but come to Christ just as you are. You do not want those terrors and horrors, they are of little use. Let me remind you of another thing; I ask you not to acquaint yourself with your sins so as to hope to know them all, because you cannot number them with man's poor arithmetic. Young, in his Night Thoughts, says, "God hides from all eyes but his own that desperate sight--a human heart." If you were to know only the tenth part of how bad you have been you would be driven mad. You who have been the most moral, the most excellent in character, if all the past sins of your heart could stand before you in their black colours, and you could see them in their true light, you would be in hell, for indeed it is hell to discover the sinfulness of sin. Do you mean to say that you would go down on your knees and ask God to send you to hell, or drive you mad?

Be not so foolish; say, "Lord, let me know my guilt enough to drive me to Christ; but do not gratify my curiosity by letting me know more; no, give me enough to make me feel that I must trust Christ, or else be lost, and I shall be well content if thou givest me that, though thou deniest me more.

Once again, my dear hearers, listen to this next caution, for it is very important. Take care thou dost not try to make a righteousness out of thy feelings. If you say, "I may not go to Christ till I feel my need of him"--that is clear legality; you are on the wrong track altogether, because Christ does not want you to feel your need in order to prepare for him; he wants no preparation, and anything which you think to be a preparation is a mistake. You are to come just as you are--today, as you are, now--not as you will be, but just now, as you now are. I do not say to you, "Go home and seek God in prayer; I say come to Christ now at this very hour;" you will never be in a better state than you are now, for you were never in a worse state, and that is the fittest state in which to come to Christ. He that is very sick is just in the right state to have a doctor; he that is filthy and begrimed is just in the right state to be washed; he that is naked is just in the right state to be clothed. That is your case. But you say, "I do not feel my need." Just so: your not feeling it proves you to have the greater need. You cannot trust your feelings, because you say, you have not any. Why, if God were to hear your prayers arid make you feel your need, you would begin to trust in your feelings, and would be led to say, "I trust Christ because I feel my need;" that would be just saying, "I trust myself." All these things are but Popery in disguise; all this preaching to sinners that they must feel this and feel that before they trust in Jesus, is just self-righteousness in another shape. I know our Calvinistic brethren will not like this sermon--I

cannot help that--for I do not hesitate to say, that Phariseeism is mixed with Hyper-Calvinism more than with any other sect in the world. And I do solemnly declare that this preaching to the prejudice and feelings of what they call sensible sinners, is nothing more than self-righteousness taking a most cunning and crafty shape, for it is telling the sinner that he must be something before he comes to Christ. Whereas the gospel is preached not to sensible sinners, or sinners with any other qualifying adjective, but to sinners as sinners, to sinners just as they are; it is not to sinners as repentant sinners, but to sinners as sinners, be their state what it may, and their feelings whatever they may. Oh, sinners, Mercy's door is wide open flung to you this morning; let not Satan push you back saying, "You are not fit;" You are not fit! that is to say, you have all the fitness Christ wants, and that is none at all. Come to him just as you are. "Oh," says one, "but you know that hymn of Hart's?

'All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him.'

I cannot get that." Let me counsel you then, never to quote part of a hymn, or part of a text: quote it all:--

"All the fitness he requlreth
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you,
'Tis his Spirits rising beam."

Come and ask him to give it to you, and believe he will give it you. Do believe my Master is longing to save you: trust him, act on that better, sinner, and you shall be saved, or else I will be lost with you. Do but believe that my Master has got a loving heart, and that he is able to forgive, and that he has a mighty arm and is able to deliver you. Do him the honour now of not measuring his corn with your bushel.

"For his ways are not your ways, neither are his thoughts your thoughts. "As high as the heaven is above the earth, so high are his ways above your ways, and his thoughts above your thoughts." To-day he says to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Sinner, if thou believest and art not saved, why God's Word is a lie, and God is not true. And wilt thou ever dream that to be the case? No, sinner; close in now with the proclamation of this gospel, and say,--

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre mercy gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
"Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there."

Thou canst not perish trusting in Christ. Though thou hast no good works and no good feelings, yet if thine arms are round the cross, and if the blood be sprinkled on thy brow, when the destroying angel shall pass through the world, he shall pass over thee. Thus is it written:--"When I see the blood, I will pass over you;"--not "when I see your feelings about the blood,"--not "when I see your faith in the blood," but "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." learn to discriminate between a sense of sin which would humble thee, and a sense of sin which would only make thee proud; when thou hast come to say, "I have felt my sin enough, and therefore I am fit to come to Christ," it is nothing but pride dressed in the garb of humility.

Let me tell the one more thing before I have done with thee on this point. Anything which keeps thee from Christ is sin, whatever though

thou hast which keeps thee from trusting Christ to-day is a sinful thought; and every hour thou continuest as thou art, as unbeliever in Christ, the wrath of God abideth on thee. Now why shouldst thou be asking for a thing which may help to keep thee from Christ all the longer? You know now that you have nothing good in you; why not trust in Christ for all? But you say, "I must first of all feel more." Poor soul, if you were to feel more acutely, you would find it all the harder to trust Christ. I prayed to God that he would show me my guilt; I little thought how he would answer me. Why I was such a fool that I would not come to Christ unless the devil dragged me there. I said, "Christ cannot have died for me, because 1 have not felt miserable enough." God heard me, and, believe me, I will never pray that prayer again; for when I began to feel my guilt, then I said, "I am too wicked to be saved," and I found the very thing I had been asking for was a curse upon me, and not a blessing. So, if thou shouldst feel what thou askest to feel, it might be the cause of they condemnation. Be wise, therefore, and listen to my Master's voice; stay not to gather together the fuller's soap, and the refiner's fire, but come thou and wash now in Jordan, and be clean; come, and stop not till thy heart be turned up with the plough, and thy soul hewn down with the axe. Come as thou art to him now. What man! wilt not thou come to Christ, when he has said, "Whosoever will, let him come?" Wilt thou not trust him when he looks down and smiles on thee and says, "Trust me, I will never deceive thee?" What, canst thou not say to him, "Master, I am very guilty, but thou hast said, Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Lord, this mercy is too great, but I believe it, I take thee it thy word; thou hast said, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will forgive your iniquities." Lord, I come

to thee, I know not how it is that thou canst forgive such an one as I am, but I believe thou canst not lie, and on that promise do I rest my soul. I know thou hast said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" Lord, I cannot understand how there can be power in the blood to wash away all manner of blasphemy, but thou hast said it, and believe it. It is thy business to make thy own word true, not mine, and thou hast said, "Whosoever will, let him come;" Lord, I am not worthy, but I do will to come, or if I do not will, yet I will to will, therefore will I come, just as I am, I know I have no good feeling to recommend myself to thee, but then thou dost not want good feeling in me, thou wilt give me all I want.

Oh my dear hearers, I feel so glad I have such a gospel as this to preach to you. If you have not received it, I pray God the Holy Ghost to send it home to you. It is so simple that men cannot believe it is true. If I were to bid you take off your shoes and run from here to York and you would be saved, why you would do it at once, and the road to York would be thronged; but when it is nothing but the soul-quickening words, "Believe and live," it is too easy for your proud hearts to do. If I told you to go and earn a thousand pounds and endow a church with it, and you would be saved, you would think the price very cheap; but when I say, "Trust Christ and be saved," you cannot do that--it is too simple. Ah, madness of the human heart! strange, strange, besotted sin, when God makes the path plain, men will not run in it for that very reason; and when he sets the door wide open, that is the very reason they will not come in. They say if the door was half a-jar and they had to push it open, they would come in. God has made the gospel too plain and too simple to suit proud hearts. May God soften proud hearts, and make you receive the Saviour.

IV. Now I come to, my last point, which I have already trenched upon,

and that is by way of EXHORTATION.

Poor sinner, seven years ago you were saying just what you are saying now, and when seven more years shall have some, you will be saying just the same. Seven years ago you said, "I would trust Christ, but I do not feel as I ought." Do you feel any better now? And when another seven years are come you will feel just as you do now. You will say, "I would come, but I do not feel fit--I do not feel my need enough." Ay, and it will keep going on for ever, till you go down to the pit of hell, saying as you go down, "I do not feel my need enough," and then the lie will be detected, and you will say, "It never said in the Word of God, I might come to Christ when I felt my need enough,' but it said Whosoever will, let him come.' I would not come as I was, therefore I am justly cast away." Hear me, sinner, when I bid thee come to Jesus as thou art, and give thee these reasons for it.

In the first place, it is a very great sin not to feel your guilt, and not to mourn over it, but then it is one of the sins that Jesus Christ atoned for on the tree. When his heart was pierced,; he paid the ransomed price for your hard heart. Oh! sinner, if Christ had only died that we might be forgiven of other sins except our hard hearts, we should never go to heaven for we have, all of us, even we who have believed, committed that great sin of being impenitent before him. If He had not died to wash that sin away as well as every other sin, where should we be? The fact that thou canst not weep, nor sorrow as thou wouldst, is an addition to thy guilt; but did not Christ wash you from that sin, black though it be? Come to him, he is able to save you even from this.

Again, come to Jesus, because it is He only who can give you that heart for which you seek. If men were not to come to Christ till they feel as they should feel, they would never come at all. I will freely confess

that if I had never trusted Christ until I felt I might have trusted him, I never could I trusted him, and could not trust him now. For there are times with me when after I have preached the gospel as plainly as I could, I have returned to my own chamber and my heart has been dead, lumpish, lying like a log within my spirit, and I have thought then if I could not come to Christ as a sinner, I could not come anyhow else. If I found in the text one word before that word "sinner"--"Jesus Christ came into the world to save"--and then an adjective, and then "sinners," I should be lost. It is just because the text says, "sinners" just as they are, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," that I can hope he came to save me. If it had said Jesus Christ came into the world to save soft-hearted sinners, I should have said, "Lord, my heart is like adamant." If it had said Jesus came into the world to save weeping sinners, I should have said, "Lord, though I press my eyelids, I could not force a tear." If it had said Jesus came into the world to save sinners that felt their need of him, I should say, "I do not feel the need of it; I know I do need thee, but I do not feel it." But, Lord, thou camest to save sinners, and I am saved. I trust thou camest to save me, and here I am, sink or swim, I rest on thee. If I perish, I will perish trusting thee; and if I must be lost, in thy hands it shall be; for in my own hands I will not be in any respect, or in any degree whatever. I come to that cross, and under that cross I stand; "thy perfect righteousness my beauty is--my glorious dress."

Come sinner to Christ, because he can soften thine heart, and thou canst never soften it thyself. He is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins; not merely the remission, but the repentance too. He gives his grace not merely to those who seek it, but even to those that seek it not. He gives repentance not to those who repent

themselves, but to those who cannot repent. And to those who are saying, "Lord I would, but cannot feel;" "I would, but cannot weep;" I say Christ is just the Saviour for you--a Christ that begins at the beginning and does not want you to begin--a Christ that shall go to the end, and won't want you to finish--a Christ that does not ask you to say Alpha, and then he will be the Omega: but he will be both Alpha and Omega. Christ, that is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. The plain gospel is just this, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." "But, Lord, I cannot see anything." "Look unto me." "But, Lord, I do not feel." "Look unto me." "But, Lord, I cannot say I feel my need." "Look unto me, not unto thyself; all this is looking to thyself." "But, Lord, I feel sometimes that I could do anything, but a week passes, and then I am hard of heart." "Look unto me." "But Lord, I have often tried." "Try no more, look unto me." "Oh, but Lord thou knowest." "Yes. I know all things. I know everything, all thine iniquity and thy sins, but look unto me." "Oh, but often, Lord, when I have heard a sermon I feel impressed, yet it is like the morning cloud and the early dew; it passes away." "Look unto me," not to thy feelings or thy impressions, look unto me." "Well," says one, "but will that really save me, just looking to Christ?" My dear soul, if that does not save thee I am not saved. The only way in which I have been saved, and the only gospel I can find in the Bible is looking to Christ. "But if I go on in sin," says one. But you cannot go on in sin; your looking to Christ will cure you that habit of sin. "But if my heart remains hard?" It cannot remain hard; you will find that looking to Christ will keep you from having a hard heart. It is just as we sing in the penitential hymn of gratitude,--

"Dissolved by thy mercy I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

You will never feel as you ought until you do not feel what you ought; you will never come to Christ until you do not feel that you can come. Come as thou art; come in all thy poverty, and stubbornness, and hardness, just as you are now, take Christ to be your all in all. Sound your songs ye angels, smite your golden harps ye redeemed ones; there are sinners snatched from hell to-day; there are men who have trusted Christ this morning. Though they scarecly know it, their sins are all forgiven; their feet are on the rock; the new song shall soon be in their mouth, and their goings shall be stablished. Farewell, ye brethren, turn to God this morning; God shall keep you, and you shall see his face in glory everlasting. Amen.

Sin Slain

A Sermon

(No. 337)

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, July 29, 1860, by the

Rev. C. H. SPURGEON,

At New Park Street, Southwark.

"And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him. Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou, seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera lay dead and the nail was in his temples."--Judges 4:22.

If he story of the world's sufferings under different tyrants could all be written, there would be no man found who would be capable of reading it. I believe that even the despots themselves, who have committed the atrocities to which I refer, would not be sufficiently cold-blooded to sit down and read the account of the agonies which their own victims have endured. I have been struck in passing through many lands with the horrible sufferings which in the olden times were endured by the poor at the hands of the rich kings and lords who were their oppressors. In almost every town in which you enter, you either have shown to you the rack, the dark dungeon, the thumb-screw, or the infernal machine, or instruments too horrible to describe--that make one's blood run chill at the very thought and sight of them. Verily, O earth, thou hast been scarred; thy back has been ploughed with many a furrow; from thy veins have gushed forth plenteous streams of blood, and thy sons and thy daughters have had to suffer agonies extreme! But oh! my brethren, I speak in sober earnestness when I declare that all the sufferings that have ever been exercised upon man have never been equal to the tyranny

which man has brought upon himself--the tyranny of sin. Sin has brought more plagues upon this earth than all the earth's tyrants. It has brought more pangs and more miseries upon men's bodies and souls than the craftiest inventions of the most cold-blooded and diabolical tormentors. Sin is the world's great Despot. It is the serpent in whose subtle folds earth's inhabitants are crushed. It is such a tyranny that none but those whom God delivers have been able to escape from it. Nay, such a tyranny that even they have been scarcely saved; and they, when saved, have had to look back and remember the dreadful slavery in which they once existed; they have remembered the wormwood and the gall; and at the remembrance the iron has entered into their souls. We have before us, in this chapter, a picture of the children of Israel attacked by a very wicked and powerful king--Jaban, the king of Canaan. It is but a faint emblem, a very indistinct picture of the oppression which sin exercises upon all mankind--the oppression which our own iniquities continually bring upon us.

I want to picture to you to-night, if I can, three acts in a great history--three different pictures illustrating one subject. I trust we have passed through all three of them, many of us; and as we shall look upon them, whilst I paint them upon the wall, I think there will be many here who will be able to say, I was in that state once;" and when we come to the last, I hope we shall be able to clap our hands, and rejoice to feel that the last is our case also, and that we are in the plight of the man with a description of whom I shall conclude.

First, I shall picture to you the sinner growing uneasy in his bondage and thinking about rebellion against his oppressors; secondly, the sinner putting to rout his sins and seeking their entire destruction; and, thirdly, I shall seek to bring to you that notable picture of the open door, and I shall stand at it and cry to those who are seeking the

life of their sins--"Come hither, and I will show you the man whom ye seek; here he lies--dead; slain by the hammer and the nail; held not in the hand of a woman, but in the hand of the seed of the woman--the man Christ Jesus."

I. First, then, let us try to picture THE SINNER GROWING UNEASY UNDER THE YOKE OF HIS SINS, AND PLANNING A REVOLT AGAINST HIS OPPRESSORS.

It is said that when a man is born a slave, slavery is not near so irksome as when he has once been free. You will have found it, perhaps, in birds and such animals that we keep under our control. If they have never known what it is fly to and fro in the air from tree to tree, they are happy in the cage; but if, after having once seen the world, and floated in the clear air, they are condemned to live in slavery, they are far less content. This is the case with man--he is born a slave. The child in the cradle is born under sin, and as we grow up we wear our manacles and scarcely know that they are about us. Use, we say, is second nature, and certainly the evil nature we have received makes the usages of sin seem as if they were not so slavish as they are. Nay, some men have become so used to their bonds, that they live with no true idea of liberty, and yet think themselves free. Nay, they take the names of freedom, and call themselves libertines, and free-thinkers, and free-doers, when they are the very worst of slaves, and might hear their chains rattle if they had but ears to hear. Until the Spirit of God comes into the heart--so strange is the use of nature--we live contented in our chains; we walk up and down our dungeon, and think we are at large. We are driven about by our task-masters, and imagine that we are free. Once let the Spirit of God come into us--once let a word of life and liberty sound in our ears--once let Jehovah Jesus speak, and we begin to be dissatisfied with our condition. Now the chain frets us; now the fetter feels too

small; now we long for a wider march than we had before, and are not content to be fettered for ever to a sinful lust. We begin to have a longing for something better, though we know not what it is. Now it is that the man begins to find fault with what he at one time thought was so passing excellent. He finds that now the cup which seemed to be all honey has traces of bitter in it; the cane once so sweet and palatable has lost its lusciousness, and he says within himself "I wish I had some nobler food than these swine's husks; this is not fit food for me." He does not know that God has begun to kindle in him new life and a diviner nature; but he knows this, that he cannot be content to be what he was before. He frets and chafes like the lion in bonds that longs to range in the forest and wilderness. He cannot endure it. And now, I say, it is that the man begins to act. His first action is the action of the children of Israel; he begins to cry unto the Lord. Perhaps it is not a prayer, as we use the term in ordinary conversation. He cannot put many words together. It is a sigh--a sigh for he knows not what. It is a groan after something--an indescribable something that he has not seen or felt, but of the existence of what he has some idea. "Oh God," saith he, "deliver me! Oh God, I feel I am not what I should be; I am not what I wish to be; I am discontented with myself." And if the prayer does not take the actual shape of "God be merciful to me a sinner," yet it means all that, for he seems to say "Lord, I know not what it is--I know not whether it be mercy or grace, or what the name of it may be; but I want something. I am a slave. I feel it all. Oh that I could be free! Oh that I could be delivered!" The man begins now, you see, to look for something higher than he has seen before. After this prayer comes action; "Now," says the man," I must begin to be up and doing." And if the Spirit of God is truly dealing with him, he is not content with prayer; he begins to feel that

though it is little enough that he can do, yet he can do at least something. Drunkenness he forsakes; at one blow he lays that enemy in the dust. Then there is his cursing and his swearing--he tries to overcome that enemy, but the oath comes out when he leasts expects it. Perhaps it gives him weeks of struggling, but at last that too is overcome. Then come the practices of his trade--these, he feels, hurt his conscience. Here is another chain to be filed off--another rivet to be torn off. He toils, he strives still crying evermore to God, and at last he is free, and that enemy is overthrown. He is like Barak; the Lord is helping him, and his enemies flee before him. Oh my brethren, I speak from experience now. What a struggle that was which my young heart waged against sin! When God the Holy Ghost first quickened me, I scarcely knew of that strong armour whereon my soul could venture. Little did I know of the precious blood which has put my sins away, and drowned them in the seas for ever. But I did know this, that I could not be what I was; that I could not rest happy unless I became something better--something purer than I felt; and oh how my spirit cried to God with groanings--I say it without any exaggeration--groanings that could not be uttered! and oh! how I sought in my poor dark way to overcome first this sin and then another, and so to do battle in God's strength against the enemies that assailed me, and not, thank God, altogether without success, though still the battle had been lost unless he had come who is the Overcomer of sin and the Deliverer of his people, and had put the hosts to flight. Have I not some here to-night who are just in this position? They have not come to Mount Zion yet, but are fighting with the Amalakites in the wilderness. They have not come to the blood of sprinkling, but somehow or other--they don't know exactly what condition theirs is,--they are fighting up hill against a dread something which they would overcome.

They cannot renounce the struggle; they sometimes fear they will be vanquished in the end. Oh, my brother or sister, I am glad to find the Lord has done so much for thee. This is one of the first marks of divine life when we begin to fight against sin.

Then courage, brethren! There shall be another picture painted soon, and that shall be thy picture too, when thou shalt be more than a conqueror, through him that hath loved thee. But I dare say this is not the picture of all here. There are some of you who say you are not slaves, and, therefore, you do not wish to be freed. But I tell you, sirs, if any earthly potentate could command you to do what the Devil makes your do, you would think yourselves the most oppressed beings in the world. If there should be a law passed in Parliament, and there should be power to put it into execution, that you should go and sit several hours of the nigh until midnight, and drink some vile poisonous stuff that would steal away your brains, so that you have to be wheeled home, you would say, "What vile tyranny! to force men to destroy their souls and bodies in that way;" and yet you do it wilfully of yourselves. And of the one blessed day of rest--the only one in seven that we have to rest in--if there were an enactment passed that you should open your shops on that day, and pursue your trade, you would say," This is a wretched land, to have such tyrants to govern it;" you would declare you would not do it and yet the devil makes you, and you go and take down your shutters as greedily as if you would win heaven by your Sunday trading. What slaves do men make of themselves when they most think themselves free! I have seen a man work harder and spend more money in seeking pleasure in that which makes him sick and ill--which makes his eyes red and his whole body feverish--than he would have done if a thousand acts of parliament had tried to drive him to do so. The devil is indeed a cruel tyrant with his subjects, but he

is such a tyrant that they willingly follow him. He rivets on them his chains, and whilst they think they are going of their own free will, he sits grinning all the while and thinking how when their laughter will change to bitterest tears, they shall be undeceived in the dread day in which hell's fire shall burn up their delusion, and the flames of the pit shall scatter the darkness that has concealed the truth from their eyes. Thus much, then, concerning the first picture--the sinner discontented and going to war with his sins.

II. And now we have the second picture--THE SINNER HAVING GONE TO WAR WITH HIS OWN SINS, HAS, TO A GREAT EXTENT, BY GOD'S GRACE, OVERCOME THEM; but he feels when this is done, that it is not enough--that external morality will not save the soul. Like Barak, he has conquered Sisera; but, not content with seeing him flee away on his feet, he wants to have his dead body before him. "No," says he, "it is not enough to vanquish, I must; destroy; it is not sufficient to get rid of evil habits, I must overcome the propensity to sin. It is not sufficient to put to flight this sin or the other; I must trample the roots of corruption beneath my feet, that sin itself may be slain." Mark, my dear hearers, that is not a work of the Spirit which is not a radical work. If you are content merely to conquer your sins and not to kill them, you may depend upon it, it is the mere work of morality--a surface work--and not the work of the Holy Spirit.

Sirs, be not content with driving out thy foes, or they will come back again to thee; be not satisfied with wearing the sheep's skin; be not content till thy wolfish nature is taken from thee, and the nature of the sheep imparted. It is not enough to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, it must be broken and a new vessel must be given; be not satisfied with whitewashing the tomb. The charnel house must be empty, and where death reigned, life must reign. There is no mistake

perhaps more common in these dangerous times than to mistake externals for internals, the outward sign for the inward grace, the painted imitation of mortality for the solid jewels of spirituality. Up, Barak! Up, thou son of Abinoam! thou hast routed the Sisera of thy drunkenness; thou hast put the hosts of thy sins to flight: but this is not enough. Sisera will return again upon thee with twice nine hundred chariots, and thou shalt yet be overcome. Rest not content till the blood of thine enemy stain the ground, until he be crushed and dead, and slain. Oh, sinner, I beseech thee never be content until grace reign in thy heart, and sin be altogether subdued. Indeed, this is what every renewed soul longs for, and must long for, nor will it rest satisfied until all this shall be accomplished. There was a time when some of us thought we would slay our sins. We wanted to put them to death, and we thought we would drown them in floods of penitence. There was a time, too, when we thought we would starve our sins; we thought we would keep out of temptation, and not go and pander to our lusts, and then they would die; and some of us can recollect when we gagged our lusts, when we pinioned their arms, and put their feet in the stocks, and then thought that would deliver us. But oh, brethren, all our ways of putting sin to death were not sufficient; we found the monster still alive, insatiate for his prey. We might rout his myrmidons, but the monster was still our conqueror. We might put to flight our habits, but the nature of sin was still in us, and we could not overcome it. Yet did we groan and cry daily, "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It is a cry to which we are accustomed even at this day, and which we shall never cease to utter, till we can say of our sins, "They are gone," and of the very nature of sin, that it has been extinguished, and that we are pure and holy even as when the first Adam came from his Maker's hands.

Well, I have some here, I have no doubt, who are like Barak pursuing after Sisera, but who are faint-hearted. You are saying, "My sin can never be forgiven, it is too great, it must escape from me, and, even if it were put to flight it never could be overcome; I am so great a stinner, a sinner of such a double dye, a scarlet sinner I must always be. I was born in sin, and I have grown up in it; and as the twig is bent the tree is inclined. Who can make straight such a gnarled oak as I am? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? if so, I, who am accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well." You begin to think that rivers might sooner run up-hill, than you could run to God and righteousness. You are tired of the battle, and ready to lay down your arms and die. But you cannot, you must not go back to be the drunkard and the swearer that you were before, and die in despair of ever overcoming the sin within; nor must you think, "Oh, I have entered upon a fight that is too much for me, I shall yet fall by the hands of mine enemy."

III. Come hither, I bring you to the third picture. I stand at THE DOOR today, not of a tent, but of a TOMB, and as I stand here I say to the sinner who is anxious to know how his sins may be killed, how his corruption may be slain, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest, and when you shall come in, YOU SHALL SEE YOUR SINS LYING DEAD, AND THE NAILS IN THEIR TEMPLES."

Sinner, the sin thou dreadest is forgiven, thou hast wept sore before God, and thou hast cast thyself on Christ and on Christ alone. In the name of him who is the Eternal God, I assure thee that thy sins are all forgiven. From the book of God's remembrance they are blotted out. They are as clean gone as the clouds that floated through the sky last year, and distilled their showers on the ground. Thy sins are gone; every one of them; the sin over which thou hast wept, the sin which caused thee

many a tear is gone, and is forgiven.

Further--dost thou ask where thy sin is? I tell thee thy sin is gone, so that it never can be recalled. Thou art so forgiven that thy sins can never have a resurrection. The nail is not driven through the hands of thy sins, but through their temples. If thou shouldest live twice ten thousand years no sin could ever be laid to thy charge again if thou believest in Christ Jesus. Thou hast no conscience of sin left. "As far as the east is from the west," so far hath he removed thy transgressions from thee. God hath spoken and said,--"Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," and it is done; none can reverse the sentence. He has cast thy sins into the depth of the sea, and they can never be found again. Nay, further, sinner, for thy peace and comfort, thy sins are not only forgiven and killed so that they cannot rise again, but thy sins have ceased to be. Their dead bodies, like the body of Moses, are brought where they never can be found. More than this, they do not exist. Again, O child of God, there doth not remain so much as a shadow of sin: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"--much less prove it against them. What dog can wag his tongue to accuse?--much less, what witness shall rise up to condemn? God hath justified thee, O sinner! if thou believest; and if thou art so justified, thou art as much accepted in God's sight as if thou hadst never sinned. Had thy life been blameless and thy path been holy even to perfection, thou hadst not been more pure in the eyes of Divine justice than thou art to-night if thy faith is fixed on the cross of Christ. Right through the brain of all thy sins, the hammer has driven the nail of Christ's grace. The spear that pierced the Saviour's heart, pierced the heart of thine iniquity; the grave in which he was buried was the tomb of all thy sins; and his resurrection was the resurrection of thy spirit to light and joy unspeakable. "Come, and I will show thee

the man whom thou seekest." This is a refreshing sight, even to the child of God, who has seen it long ago, and it will ever be solemn for us to contemplate the sin. It must ever be a direful spectacle; for an enemy, even when dead, is a ghastly sight. The head of Goliath, even though it makes us smile when it is cut off, is yet the head of a grim monster, and he is a monster even when he is slain. God forbid we should ever glory in sin, but it is a theme for joy to a Christian when he can look upon his sins drowned in the blood of Jesus,

"Plunged, as in a shoreless sea;
Lost, as in immensity."

My soul looks back to the days of my youth, and remembers her former transgressions,--she drops a tear of sorrow; she looks to the cross, and sees them all forgiven, and she drops there tears of gratitude. My eye runs along the days of manhood, and observes, with sorrow, omissions and commissions innumerable; but it lights up with a smile most rapturous when I see the flood of Jesus' blood swelling over the sands of my sins till they are all covered and no eye can behold them. Oh! child of God, come and see the man whom thou seekest, here he lies slain before thee. Come and see all thy sins for ever dead; fear them not; weep for them; avoid them in days to come, and remember they are slain. Look at thy sins as vanquished foes, and always regard them as being nailed to his cross--to his cross who

"Sang the triumph when he rose."

But I hear you say, "Well, I have faith enough to believe that my sins are overcome in that way, and that they are conquered and dead in that respect; but O, sir, as to this body of sin within me--I cannot get it killed, I cannot get it overcome." Now, when we begin the divine life, we believe that we shall get rid of our old Adam entirely. I know most of you had a notion when you first started in the pilgrimage, that as

soon as ever you received grace, depravity would be cast out--did you find it so, brethren? I have heard some preachers laugh at the theory of the two natures. I never answered them, for I dare say they would not have comprehended me if I had tried the experiment; but one thing I know--that the theory of the two natures in a Christian is no theory to me, but a truth which daily proves itself. I cannot say with Ralph Erskine--

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

but if that is not the truth it is very near to it; it is next door to it; and while on the one hand I am able to see sin perishing within, on the other hand I cannot fail to see the struggle which my soul has to wage against it, and the daily warfare and fightings that necessarily ensue. I know that grace is the stronger principle, and that it must overcome at last; but there are times when the old man seems for a little to get the upper hand--Ishmael prevails, and Isaac is cast to the ground; though this I know, that Isaac has the promise and Ishmael must be driven out. Well, child of God, if you have to look upon the Sisera of your sin still fleeing from you--be of good cheer; it is but the experience of all the people of God. Moreover, there have been many who have said they did not feel this; but my dear brethren, they did feel it, only that they did not use the same language as we do who have felt it. I know one or two good brothers who say they believe in perfection, but I find all the perfection they believe in is the very perfection that I preach. It is perfection in Christ, but they do not believe in perfection in themselves. Nor do I believe that any Christian who reads his own heart for a single day, can indulge the idea of being totally free from the risings of depravity, and the risings of the heart after sin. If there be such, I can only say, "I

wish I could change places with thee, brother, for it is my hard lot to have wars and fightings day by day, and it seems difficult to say sometimes which way the matter will end, or how the battle will be decided." Indeed, one could not know it at all except by faith, for sight seems to lead to an opposite opinion. Well, be of good cheer, Christian. Though the old man is not slain in you, as you know personally yet I would have you remember that as you are in Christ, the old man is crucified. "Knowing that your old man is crucified with him." And know this, that the day shall come when the angels shall open wide the door, and ye that have been panting after your enemy, like Barak pressing after Sisera, shall hear the welcome Spirit say, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest," and there shall lie thine old inbred lusts, and he who is the father of them, old Satan himself, all chained and bound and cast into the lake of fire. Then will you sing indeed unto the Lord, "Oh! sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." Till then, brethren, pursue after your sins. Spare them not, neither great nor small, and God speed you that you may fight valiantly, and by his aid utterly overcome them.

As for thee, poor sinner, whom I lately reminded that thou canst not slay thy sins, nor work out thy salvation, thou canst not be thine own deliverer. Trust in thy Master. Put thy soul into the hands of him who is able and willing to preserve and keep it, and to protect it; and mark me, if to-night thou wilt have nothing to do with thyself, but wilt give thyself to Christ entirely, then to-night thou art saved.

What if my Master should give me to-night some fishes at the first shaking of the net, and what if some poor sinner should say within himself--

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin,

Hath like a mountain rose;

I know his courts, I'll enter in,

Whatever may oppose."

Come, sinner, come! Nay, do you say you cannot come? "My sins, my sins!" Come, and I will show thee thy sins nailed to the cross of Christ. "But I must not come," says one; "I have so hard a heart." Come, and I will show thee thy hard heart dissolved in a bath of blood divine. "Oh! but," still thou sayest, "I dare not come." Come, and I will show thee those fears of thine lulled into an eternal sleep, and thy soul resting on Christ shall never need to fear again, for thou shalt be his in time, his in life and death, and his in an eternity of bliss.

May the Lord add his blessing now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Love To Jesus

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"O You whom my soul loves." Song of Solomon 1:7.

IF the life of a Christian may be compared to a sacrifice, then humility digs the foundation for the altar; prayer brings the unhewn stones and piles them, one upon the other; penitence fills the trench round about the altar with water; obedience lays the wood in order--faithpleads the Jehovah-Jireh, and places the victim upon the altar. But the sacrifice, even then, is incomplete, for where is the fire? Love, love alone, can consummate the sacrifice by supplying the necessary fire from Heaven. Whatever we lack in our piety, as it is indispensable that we should have faith in Christ, so is it absolutely necessary that we should have love to Him. That heart which is devoid of an earnest love to Jesus is surely still dead in trespasses and sins. And if any man should venture to affirm that he had faith in Christ, but had no love to Him, we would at once also venture to affirm as positively that his religion was vain! Perhaps the great need of the religion of the times is love. Sometimes, as I look upon the world at large, and the Church which lies too much in its bosom, I am apt to think that the Church has light, but lacks fire. She has some degree of true faith, clear knowledge, and much besides which is precious, but she lacks to a great extent that flaming love with which she once, as a chaste virgin, walked with Christ through the fires of martyrdom; when she showed to Him her undefiled, unquenchable love in the catacombs of the city and the caves of the rocks--when the snows of the Alps might testify to the virgin purity of the love of the saints by the purple

stain which marked the shedding of blood in defense of our bleeding Lord--blood which had been shed in defense of Him whom, though they had not seen His face, "unceasingly they adored."

It is my pleasant task this morning to stir up your pure minds, that you, as part of Christ's Church, may feel somewhat in your hearts today of love to Him, and may be able to address Him not only under the title, "You in whom my soul trusts," but, "You whom my soul loves."

Last Sabbath, if you remember, we devoted to simple faith and tried to preach the Gospel to the ungodly. [Sermon #336, Volume --STRUGGLES OF CONSCIENCE--] The present hour we devote to the pure, Spirit-born, godlike, flame of love.

On looking at my text, I shall come to regard it thus. First, we shall listen to the rhetoric of thelipsas we here read it in these words, "O You whom my soul loves." We shall then observe the logic of the heart, which would justify us in giving such a title as this to Christ. I will then come, in the third place, to something which even surpasses rhetoric or logic--the absolute demonstration of the daily life;And I pray that we may be able to constantly prove by our acts that Jesus Christ is He whom our soul loves.

I. First, then, the loving title of our text is to be considered as expressing RHETORIC OF THE LIPS. The text calls Christ, "You whom my soul loves." Let us take this title and dissect it a little.

One of the first things which will strike us when we come to look upon it is the reality of the love which is here expressed. Reality, I say--understanding the term, "real," not in contradistinction to that which is lying and fictitious--but in contrast to that which is shadowy and indistinct. Do you not notice that the spouse here speaks of Christ as One whom she knew actually to exist? Not as an abstraction, but as a Person. She speaks of Him as a real Person, " Youwhom my soul loves."

Why, these seem to be the words of one who is pressing Him to her bosom, who sees Him with her eyes, who tracks Him with her feet, who knows that He is, and that He will reward the love which diligently seeks Him. Brothers and Sisters, there is often a great deficiency in our love to Jesus. We do not realize the Person of Christ. We think about Christ, and then we love the conception that we have formed of Him. But O, how few Christians view their Lord as being as real a Person as we are ourselves--very Man--a Man who could suffer, a Man who could die, substantial flesh and blood--very God as real as if He were not invisible, and as truly existent as though we could compass Him in our minds. We need to have a real Christ more fully preached and more fully loved by the Church. We fail in our love because Christ is not real to us as He was to the early Church. The early Church did not preach much Doctrine; they preached Christ. They had little to say of truths about Christ; it was Christ Himself--His hands, His feet, His side, His eyes, His head, His crown of thorns, the sponge, the vinegar, the nails. O for the Christ of Mary Magdalene--rather than the Christ of the critical theologian! Give me the wounded body of Divinity, rather than the most sound system of theology! Let me show you what I mean.

Suppose an infant is taken away from its mother, and you should seek to foster in it a love to the parent by constantly picturing before it the idea of a mother--and attempting to give it the thought of a mother's relation to the child. Indeed, my Friends, I think you would have a difficult task to fix in that child the true and real love which it ought to bear towards her who bore it! But give that child a mother; let it hang upon that mother's real breast; let it derive its nourishment from her very heart--let it see that mother; feel that mother; put its little arms about that mother's real neck--and you have

no hard task to make it love its mother. So is it with the Christian. We need Christ--not an abstract, doctrinal, pictured Christ--but a realChrist! I may preach to you many a year, and try to infuse into your souls a love of Christ; but until you can feel that He is a real Man, and a real Person, really present with you, and that you may speak to Him, talk to Him, and tell Him of your needs, you will not readily attain to a love like that of the text, so that you can call Him, "You whom my soul loves." I want you to feel, Christian, that your love to Christ is not a mere pious affection, but that as you love your wife, as you love your children, as you love your parents, so you love Christ; that though your love to Him is of a finer cast and a higher mold, yet it is just as real as the more earthly passion! Let me suggest another figure. A war is raging in Italy for liberty. The very thought of liberty nerves a soldier; the thoughtof a hero makes a man a hero! Let me go and stand in the midst of the army, and preach to them what heroes should be, and what brave men they should be who fight for liberty. My dear Friends, the most earnest eloquence might have but little power! But put into the midst of these men, Garibaldi--heroism incarnate; place before their eyes that dignified man-- who seems like some old Roman, newly arisen from his tomb--they see before them what liberty means, and what daring is, what courage can attempt, and what heroism can perform! For there he is, and firmed by his actual presence, their arms are strong, their swords are sharp, and they dash to the battle at once! His presence ensures victory, because they realize in his presence the thought which makes men brave and strong. So the Church needs to feel and see a real Christ in her midst! It is not the idea of disinterestedness; it is not the idea of devotion; it is not the idea of self-consecration that will ever make the Church mighty--it must be that idea Incarnate, consolidated, Personified in

the actual existence of a realized Christ in the camp of the Lord's host! I pray for you, and ask you to pray for me, that we may, each one of us, have a love which realizes Christ, and which can address Him as, "You whom my soul loves."

But again, look at the text, and you will perceive another thing very clearly. The Church, in the expression which she uses concerning Christ, speaks not only with a realization of His Presence, but with a firm assurance of her own love. Many of you who really love Christ, can seldom get further than to say, "O You whom my soul desires to love! O You whom I hopeI love!" But this sentence says not so at all; this title has not the shadow of a doubt or a fear upon it--"O You whom my soul loves!" Is it not a happy thing for a child of God, when he knows that he loves Christ? When he can speak of it as a matter of consciousness?--a thing out of which he is not to be argued by all the reasoning of Satan--a thing concerning which he can put his hand upon his heart and appeal to Jesus and say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You"? I say, is not this a delightful frame of mind?

Or rather, I reverse the question--Is not that a sad miserable state of heart in which we have to speak of Jesus other than with assured affection? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, there may be times when the most loving heart may, from the very fact that it loves intensely and loves sincerely, doubt whether it loves at all! But then such times will be seasons of great soul-searching, and nights of anguish. He who truly loves Christ will never give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, when he is in doubt about his heart belonging to Jesus. "No," he says, "this is a matter too precious for me to question as to whether I am the possessor of it or not; this is a thing so vital that I cannot let it be with a, 'perhaps,' as a matter of chance. No, I must know whether I love my Lord or not, whether I am His or not."

If I am addressing any this morning who fear they do not love Christ, and yet hope they do, let me beg you, my dear Friends, not to rest content in your present state of mind! Never be satisfied till you know that you are standing on the Rock, and until you are quite certain that you really love Christ. Imagine for a moment one of the Apostles telling Christ that he thoughthe loved Him! Fancy for a moment your own spouse telling you that she hopedshe loved you. Fancy your child upon your knee saying, "Father, I sometimes think I love you." What a stinging thing to say to you! You would almost as soon he said, "I hate you." Because, what is it? Shall he, over whom you watch with care, merely think he loves you? Shall she who lies in my bosom, doubt and make it a matter of conjecture, as to whether her heart is mine or not? O God forbid we should ever dream of such a thing in our ordinary relations of life! Then how is it that we indulge in it in our piety? Is it not sickly and maudlin piety? Is it not a diseased state of heart that ever puts us in such a place at all? Is it not even a deadly state of heart that would let us rest content there? No, let us not be satisfied till, by the full work of the Holy Spirit, we are made sure and certain, and can say with unstammering tongue, "O You whom my soul loves."

Now notice something else equally worthy of our attention. The Church, the spouse, in thus speaking of her Lord, thus directs our thoughts not merely to her confidence of love, but to the unity of her affections with regard to Christ. She has not two lovers, she has but one. She does not say, "O You on whom my heart is set!" but, "O You!" She has but one after whom her heart is panting. She has gathered her affections into one bundle--she has made them but one affection--and then she has cast that bundle of myrrh and spices upon the breast of Christ. He is to her the, "Altogether Lovely," the gathering up of all

the loves which once strayed abroad. She has put before the Sun of her heart a magnifying glass, which has brought all her love to a focus, and it is all concentrated with all its heat and vehemence upon Christ Jesus Himself! Her heart, which once seemed like a fountain sending forth many streams, has now become as a fountain which has but one channel for its waters. She has stopped up all the other issues; she has cut away the other pipes, and now the whole stream in one strong current runs toward Him and Him, alone! The Church, in the text here, is not a worshipper of God and of Baal, too. She is no time-server, who has a heart for all comers. She is not as the harlot, whose door is open for every wayfarer. But she is a chaste one, and she sees none but Christ, and she knows none whom her soul desires but her crucified Lord. The wife of a noble Persian, having been invited to be present at the wedding feast of King Cyrus, her husband asked her merrily upon her return whether she did not think the bridegroom-monarch a most noble man. Her answer was, "I know not whether he is noble or not--my husband was so before my eyes, that I saw none beside him--I have seen no beauty but in him." So if you ask the Christian in our text, "Is not such-an-one fair and lovely?" "No," she replies, "my eyes are fully fixed on Christ. My heart is so taken up with Him, that I cannot tell if there is beauty anywhere else--I know that all beauty, and all loveliness is summed up in Him." Sir Walter Raleigh used to say, "if all the histories of tyrants--the cruelty, the blood, the lust, the infamy, were all forgotten--yet all these histories might be rewritten out of the life of Henry VIII." And I may say by way of contrast, "If all the goodness, all the love, all the gentleness, all the faithfulness that ever existed could all be blotted out, they could all be rewritten out of the history of Christ." To the Christian, Christ is the only One she loves; she has no divided aims, no two adored ones;

but she speaks of Him as of one to whom she has given her whole heart, and none have anything besides. "Oh You whom my soul loves."

Come, Brothers and Sisters, do we love Christ after this fashion? Do we love Him so that we can say, "Compared with our love to Jesus, all other loves are but as nothing"? We have those sweet loves which make earth dear to us. We do love those who are our kindred according to the flesh--we were, indeed, beneath the beasts if we did not! But some of us can say, "We love Christ better than husband or wife, or brother or sister." Sometimes we think we could say with St. Jerome, "If Christ should bid me go this way, and my mother did hang about my neck to draw me another; and my father were in my way, bowing at my knees with tears entreating me not to go; and my children plucking at my skirts should seek to pull me the other way, I must unclasp my mother, I must push to the very ground my father, and put aside my children, for I must follow Christ." We cannot tell which we love the most till they have come into collision. But when we come to see that the love of mortals requires us to do this--and the love of Christ to do the reverse--then shall we see which we love better! Oh, those were hard times with the martyrs! That good man, for instance, Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, who was the father of some 12 children, all of them but little ones, on the road to the stake, his enemies had contrived that his wife should meet him with all the little ones, and she had set them in a row kneeling down by the roadside. His enemies expected that surely, now, he would recant, and for the sake of those dear babes, would certainly seek to save his life. But no! No! He had given them all up to God, and he could trust them with his heavenly Father! He could not do a wrong thing even for the felicity of covering these little birds with his wings, and cherishing them beneath his feathers.

He took them one by one to his bosom, and looked and looked again; and

it pleased God to put into the mouth of his wife and of his children words which encouraged him, instead of discouraging him, and before he went from them, his very babes had bid their father play the man, and die boldly for Christ Jesus! Yes, Soul, we must have a love like this which cannot be rivaled, which cannot be shared--which is like a flood tide--other tides may come up very high upon the shore, but this comes up to the very rocks and beats there, filling our soul to the very brim! I pray God we may know what such a love to Christ as this may mean.

Furthermore, I want to pluck you one more flower. If you will look at the title before us, you will have to learn not only its reality, its assurance, its unity--you will have to notice its constancy, "O You whom my soul loves." Not "did love yesterday," or, "may begin to love tomorrow," but, "You whom my soul loves"--"You whom I have loved ever since I knew You, and whose love has become as necessary to me as my vital breath or my native air." The true Christian is one who loves Christ forever. He does not play fast and loose with Jesus--pressing Him today to his bosom, and then turning aside and seeking after any Delilah who may with her witcheries pollute him! No, he feels that he is a Nazarite unto the Lord. He cannot, and he will not pollute himself with sin at any time or in any place. Love to Christ in the faithful heart is as the love of the dove to its mate. She, if her mate should die, can never be tempted to be married unto another, but she sits still upon her perch and sighs out her mournful soul until she dies, too. So is it with the Christian; if he had no Christ to love, he must die, for his heart has become Christ's. And so if Christ were gone, love could not be; then his heart would be gone, too, and a man without a heart is dead. The heart--is it not the vital principle of the body? And love--is it not the vital principle of the soul? Yet there are some

who profess to love the Master, but only walk with Him by fits, and then go abroad like Dinah into the tents of the Shechemites. Oh, take heed, you professors, who seek to have two husbands! My Master will never be a part-husband. He is not such a One as to have half of your heart! My Master, though He is full of compassion and very tender, has too noble a spirit to allow Himself to be half-proprietor of any kingdom!

Chanute, the Danish king, might divide England with Edmund the Ironside, because he could not win the whole country, but my Lord will have every inch of you, or none! He will reign in you from one end of the isle of man to the other, or else He will not put a foot upon the soil of your heart. He was never part-proprietor in a heart, and He will not stoop to such a thing now. What says the old Puritan? "A heart is so little a thing, that it is scarcely enough for a small bird's breakfast, and you say it is too great a thing for Christ to have it all?" No, give Him the whole! It is but little when you weigh His merit, and very small when measured with His loveliness. Give Him all! Let your united heart, your undivided affection be constantly, every hour, given up to Him--

"Can you cleave to your Lord? Can you cleave to your Lord,
When the many turn aside?
Can you witness He has the living Word,
And none upon earth beside?
And can you endure with the Virgin band,
The lowly and pure in heart,
Who, where ever their Lamb does lead,
From His footsteps never depart?
Do you answer, 'We can'? Do you answer, 'We can,
Through His love's constraining power'?

But ah, remember the flesh is weak,

And will shrink in the trial hour.

Yet yield to His love, who round you now,

The bands of a man would cast;

The cords of His love, who was given for you,

To the altar binding you fast" May that be your constant lot--still to abide in Him who has loved you.

I will make but one more remark, lest I weary you in thus trying to anatomize the rhetoric of love. In our text you will clearly perceive a vehemence of affection. The spouse says of Christ, "O You whom my soul loves." She means not that she loves Him a little, that she loves Him with an ordinary passion, but that she loves Him in all the deep sense of that word. Oh, Christian Brothers and Sisters, I proclaim unto you that I fear there are thousands of professors who never knew the meaning of this word, "love," as to Christ! They have known it when it referred to mortals; they have felt its flame, they have seen how every power of the body and of the soul are carried away with it; but they have not felt it with regard to Christ. I know you can preach about Him, but do you love Him? I know you can pray to Him, but do you love Him? I know you trust Him--you think you do--but do you loveHim? Oh, is there a love to Jesus in your heart like that of the spouse when she could say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His lips, for His love is better than wine"? "No," you say, "that is too familiar for me." Then I fear you do not love Him, for love is always familiar! Faith may stand at a distance, for her look is saving; but Love comes near, for she must kiss, she must embrace. Why, Beloved, sometimes the Christian so loves his Lord, that his language becomes unmeaning to the ears of others who have never been in his state! Love has a celestial tongue of her own, and I have sometimes heard her speak so that the lips of

worldlings have mocked, and men have said, "That man rants and raves--he knows not what he says." Hence it is that Love often becomes a Mystic, and speaks in mystic language, into which the stranger intrudes not. Oh, you should see Love when she has her heart full of her Savior's Presence, when she comes out of her chamber! Indeed she is like a giant refreshed with new wine! I have seen her dash down difficulties, tread upon hot irons of affliction, and her feet have not been scorched; I have seen her lift up her spear against ten thousand, and she has slain them at one time; I have known her give up all she had, even to the stripping of herself, for Christ, and yet she seemed to grow richer, and to be decked with ornaments as she made herself poor, that she might cast her all upon her Lord and give up all to Him! Do you know this love, Christian Brothers and Sisters? Some of you do, I know, for I have seen you clearly manifest it in your lives. As for the rest of you, may you learn it, and get above the low standing of the mass of Christ's Church at the present day. Get up from the bogs and marshes and damp morasses of lukewarm Laodiceanism and come up! Come up higher, up to the mountaintop, where you shall stand bathing your foreheads in the sunlight, seeing earth beneath you--its very tempests under your feet, its clouds and darkness rolling down below in the valley while you, talking with Christ, who speaks to you out of the clouds--are almost caught up into the third Heaven to dwell there with Him!

Thus have I tried to explain the rhetoric of my text, "You whom my soul loves."

II. Now let me come to THE LOGIC OF THE HEART, which lies at the bottom of the text. My Heart, why should you love Christ? With what argument will you justify yourself? Strangers stand and hear me tell of Christ and they say, "Why should you love your Savior so?" My Heart, you

cannot answer them so as to make them see His loveliness, for they are blind--but you can at least be justified in the ears of those who have understandings; for doubtless the virgins will love Him, if you will tell them why you love Him. Our hearts give for their reason why they love Him. First, this-- We love Him for His infinite loveliness. If there were no other reason, if Christ had not bought us with His blood, yet sometimes we feel if we had renewed hearts, we must love Him for having died for others. I have sometimes felt in my own soul, that setting aside the benefit I received from His dear Cross, and His most precious passion, which, of course, must always be the deepest motive of love, "for we love Him because He first loved us"--yet setting aside all that, there is such beauty in Christ's Character--such loveliness in His passion--such a glory in that Self-Sacrifice, that one mustlove Him! Can I look into Your eyes and not be smitten with Your love? Can I gaze upon Your thorn-crowned head, and shall not my heart feel the thorns within it? Can I see You in the fever of death, and shall not my soul be in a fever of passionate love to You? It is impossible to see Christ and not to love Him! You cannot be in His company without at once feeling that you are welded to Him. Go and kneel by His side in Gethsemane's Garden, and I am persuaded that the drops of gore, as they fall upon the ground, shall, each one of them, be irresistible reasons why you should love Him! Hear Him as He cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Remember that He endures this out of love to others, and you must love Him. If you ever read the history of Moses, you believe him to be the grandest of men, and you admire him and look up to him as to some huge colossus, some mighty giant of the olden times. But you never feel a particle of love in your hearts towards Moses; you could not--his is an unlovable character--there is something to admire, but nothing to win attachment. When you see Christ, you look

up, but you do more--you feel drawn up! You do not admire so much as love. You do not adore so much as embrace. His Character enchants, subdues, overwhelms--and with the irresistible impulse of its own sacred attraction, it draws your spirit right up to Him. Well did Dr. Watts say--

"His worth, if all the nations knew, Surely the whole earth would love Him, too."

But still, Love has another argument why she loves Christ, namely, Christ's love to her. Did You love me, Jesus, King of Heaven, Lord of angels, Master of all worlds? Did You set Your heart on me? What? Did You love me from of old, and in eternity choose meto Yourself? Did You continue to love meas the ages rolled on? Did You come from Heaven to earth that you might win meto be Your spouse, and do You love meso that You do not leave me alone in this poor desert world? And are You this very day preparing a house for mewhere I shall dwell with You forever? A very wretch, Lord, I should prove had I no love to You! I mustlove You; it is impossiblefor me to resist it--that thought that You love mehas compelled my soul to love You! ME?Me? What was there in me? Could You see beauties in me? I see none in myself; my eyes are red with weeping because of my blackness and deformity; I have said even to the sons of men, "Look not upon me, for I am black, because the sun has looked upon me." And do You see beauties in me? What a quick eye You must have--no, rather it must be that You have made my eyes to be Your mirror, and so You see Yourself in me, and it is YourImage that You love--surely You could not love me! That ravishing text in the Canticles, where Jesus says to the spouse, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." Can you imagine Christ saying that to you? And yet He has said it, "You are all fair, My love, there is no spot in you." He has put away your blackness, and you stand in His sight as

perfect as though you had never sinned; as full of loveliness as though you were what you shall be when made like unto Him at last! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, some of you can say with emphasis, "Did He love me? Then I must love Him." I run my eyes along your ranks--there sits a Brother who loves Christ, who not many months ago cursed Him! There sits a drunkard--there another who was in prison for crimes--and He loved you, even you who could abuse the wife of your bosom, because she loved the dear name! You were never happier than when you were violating His day, and showing your disrespect to His ministers, and your hatred to His cause, yet He loved you!

And me! Even me!--forgetful of a mother's prayers, ignoring a father's tears, having much of the Light of God, and yet sinning much, He loved meand has proved His love! I charge you, oh my Heart, by the roes and by the hinds of the field--give yourself wholly up to my Beloved! Spend and be spent for Him! Is that yourcharge to yourheart this morning? Oh, it must be, if you know Jesus, and then know that Jesus loves you! One more reason does Love give us which is yet more powerful still. Love feels that she must give herself to Christ, because of Christ's sufferingfor her--

"Can I Gethsemane forget?
Or there Your conflict see,
Your agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee?
"When to the Cross I turn my eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! My Sacrifice!
I must remember Thee."

My life, when it shall ebb out, may cause me to lose many mental powers, but memory will love no other name than is recorded there. The

agonies of Christ have burnt His name into our hearts; you cannot stand and see Him mocked by Herod's men of war, you cannot behold Him made nothing of, and spit upon by menial lips, you cannot see Him with the nails pierced through His hands and through His feet, you cannot mark Him in the extreme agonies of His awful passion without saying, "And did You suffer all this for me? Then I must love You, Jesus. My heart feels that no other can have such a claim upon it as You have, for none others have spent themselves for me as You have done. Others may have sought to buy my love with the silver of earthly affection, and with the gold of a zealous and affectionate character, but You have bought it with Your precious blood, and You have the richest claim to it--Yours shall it be and that forever!"

This is love's logic. I may well stand here and defend the Believer's love to his Lord. I wish I had more to defend than I have. I dare stand here and defend the utmost extravagancies of speech, and the wildest fanaticisms of action, when they have been done for love to Christ. I say again, I only wish I had more to defend in these degenerate times. Has a man given up all for Christ? I will prove him wise if he has given up for such an One as Christ is. Has a man died for Christ? I write over his epitaph that he surely was no fool who had but the wisdom to give up his heart for One who had His heart pierced for him. Let the Church try to be extravagant for once; let her break the narrow bounds of her conventional prudence, and for once arise and dare to do wonders--let the age of miracles return to us--let the Church make bare her arm and roll up the sleeves of her formality! Let her go forth with some mighty thought within her at which the worldling shall laugh and scoff, and I will stand here and before the bar of a scoffing world, dare to defend her! Oh Church of God, you can do no extravagance for Christ! You may bring out your Marys, and they may break their

alabaster boxes, but He deserves well the breaking; you may shed your perfume and give to Him rivers of oil, and ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts, but He well deserves it! I see the Church as she was in the first centuries, like an army storming a city--a city that was surrounded with a vast moat, and there was no means of reaching the ramparts except by filling up the moat with the dead bodies of the Church's own martyrs and confessors! Do you see them? A bishop has just now fallen in; his head has been cut off with the sword. The next day at the tribunal, there are 20 wishing to die, that they may follow him! And on the next day, 20 more! And the stream pours on till the huge moat is filled! Then, those who follow after, scale the walls and plant the blood-red standard of the Cross, the trophy of their victory upon the top!

Should the world ask, "Why this expense of blood?" I answer, He is worthy for whom it was shed! The world asks, "Why this waste of suffering? Why this pouring out of an energy in a cause that at best is but fanatical?" I reply, "He is worthy! He is worthy, though the whole world were put into the censer, and all men's blood were the frankincense!, He is worthy to have it all sacrificed before Him! Though the whole Church should be slaughtered, He is worthy upon whose altar it should be sacrificed! Though every one of us should lie and rot in a dungeon; though the moss should grow upon our eyelids; though our bodies should be given to the carrion crows, He is worthy to claim the sacrifice! And it were all too mean a gift for such an One as He is!" Oh Master, restore unto the Church the strength of love which can hear such language and feel it to be true.

III. Now I come to my last point, upon which I must dwell but briefly. Rhetoric is good, logic is better, but A POSITIVE DEMONSTRATION is the best!

I sought to give you rhetoric when I expounded the words of the text. I have tried to give you logic now that I have given you the reasons for the love in the text. And now I want youto give--Icannot give it--I want youto give, each for himself or herself, the demonstration of your love for Christ in your daily lives. Let the world see that this is not a mere label to you--a label for something that does not exist, but that Christ really is to you "Him whom your soul loves." You ask me how you shall do it, and I reply thus--I do not ask you to shave your crown, and become a monk, or to cloister yourself, my Sister, and become a nun. Such a thing might even show your love to yourself rather than your love to Christ. But I ask you to go home, now, and during the days of the week engage in your ordinary business. Go with the men of the world as you are called to do, and take the calling which Christ has given to you, and see if you cannot honor Him in your calling. I, as a minister, of course must find it to some degree less honorable work to serve Christ than you do; because my calling does, as it were, supply me with gold, and for me to make a golden image of Christ out of that is but small work, though God provides, I find, more than my poor strength could do apart from His Grace. But for you to work out the image of Christ in the iron, or clay, or common metal of your ordinary conversation--oh, this will be glorious, indeed! And I think you may honor Christ in your sphere as much as I can in mine--perhaps more--for some of you may know more trouble, you may have more poverty, you may have more temptation, more enemies; and, therefore, you, by loving Christ under all these trials, may demonstrate more fully than ever I can, how true your love is to Him, and how soul-inspiring is His love to you!

Away, I say, and look out on the morrow, and the next day, for opportunities of doing something for Christ! Speak up for His dear name

if there are any who abuse Him. And if you find Him wounded in His members, be you as Eleanor, queen of England's king, and suck the poison out of his wounds! Be ready to have your name abused rather than He should be dishonored! Always stand up for Him, and be His champion; let Him not lack a friend, for He stood as your Friend when you had none! If you meet with any of His poor people, show them love for His sake, as David did to Mephibosheth out of love to Saul. If you know any of them to be hungry, set food before them; you had as good set the dish before Jesus Christ Himself. If you see them naked, clothe them; you do clothe Christ when you clothe His people. No, not only seek to do this good temporally to His children, but seek to always be a Christ to those who are notHis children as yet. Go among the wicked and among the lost, and the abandoned--tell them the words of Him--tell them Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Go after His lost sheep; be shepherds as He was a shepherd, and so will you show your love. Give what you can to Him. When you die, make Him heir of some of your estate. I would not think I loved my friend if I did not sometimes make him a present. I would not think I loved Christ if I did not give Him something, some sweet cane with money, some fat of my burnt sacrifices. I heard the other day a question asked concerning an old man who had long professed to be a Christian. They were saying he left so much and so much, and one said, "But did he leave Christ anything in his will?" Someone laughed and thought it ridiculous! Ah, so it would be, because men do not think of Christ as being a Person; but if we had this love, it would be but natural for us to give to Him, to live for Him and, perhaps, if we had anything, at last to let Him have it--that so even dying we might give our Friend in our dying testament a proof that we remembered Him, even as He remembered us in His last will and testament!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters--what we need more of in the Church is more extravagant love to Christ! I want each of you to show your love to Jesus by doing something, the like of which you have never done before. I remember saying one Sabbath morning, that the Church ought to be the place of invention as much as the world. We do not know what machine is to be discovered yet by the world, but every man's wit is at work to find out something new. So ought the wits of the Church to be at work to find out some new plan of serving Christ. Robert Raikes "invented" Sunday schools, John Pounds the Ragged School--but are we to be content with only carrying on their inventions? No! We need something new! It was in the Surrey Hall, through that sermon, that our Brothers first thought of the midnight meetings that were held--an invention suggested by the sermon I preached upon the woman with the alabaster box. [Sermon #286, Volume 6--a

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But we have not come to the end, yet! Is there no man or woman who can invent some new deed for Christ? Is there no Brother or Sister who can do something more for Him than has been done today, or yesterday, or during the last month? Is there no man who will dare to be strange and singular and wild and in the world's eye to be fanatical? Remember, that is not love which is not fanatical in the eyes of man! Depend upon it, that is not love that only confines itself to propriety. I would the Lord would put into your heart some thought of giving an unaccustomed thank-offering to Him, or of doing an unusual service, so that Christ might be honored with the best of your lambs, and that the fat of your bullocks might be exceedingly glorified by your proof of love to Him.

God bless you as a congregation. I can only invoke His blessing, for O, these lips refuse to speak of love which I trust my heart knows, and which I desire to feel more and more! Sinner, trust Christ beforeyou seek to love Him--and trusting Christ you willlove Him, by His Grace. Amen.

Chapter 50

The Sons of God

A Sermon

(No. 339)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 7th, 1860, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."--Romans 8:16, 17.

MY brethren, what a contrast there is between the present and future estate of the child of God! The believer is here the brother to the worm; in heaven he shall be next of kin to the angels. Here he is covered with the sweat and dust which he acquired by Adam's fall; there his brow shall be bright with the immortality which is conferred upon him by the resurrection of Christ. Here the heir of heaven is unknown; he is in disguise, full often clad in the habiliments of poverty, but there his princely character shall be discerned and acknowledged, he shall be waited upon by angels, and shall share in the admiration which the universe shall pour upon the glorified Redeemer. Well said our poet just now,

"It doth not yet appear, how great we must be made."

I think I need not remind you of your condition here below; you are too conversant with it, being hourly fretted with troubles, vexed with your own infirmities, with the temptations of Satan, and with all the allurements of this world. You are quite conscious that this is not your rest. There are too many thorns in your nest, to permit you to

hope for an abiding city below the skies. I say, it is utterly needless for me to refresh your memories about your present condition; but I feel it will be a good and profitable work if I remind you that there are high privileges of which you are possessors even now; there are divine joys which even this day you may taste. The wilderness has its manna; the desert is gladdened with water from the rock. God hath not forsaken us; the tokens of his goodness are with us, and we may rejoice in full many a gracious boon which is ours this very day. I shall direct your joyous attention to one precious jewel in your treasury, namely, your adoption into the family of God.

There are four things of which I shall speak this morning. First, a special privilege; second, a special proof of it, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; then thirdly, a special privilege, that of heirship; and fourthly, the practical part of the sermon and the conclusion shall be a special manner of life demanded of such persons.

I. First, then, my brethren, a SPECIAL PRIVILEGE mentioned in the text. "We are the children of God." And here I am met upon the very threshhold by the opposition of certain modern theologians, who hold that sonship is not the special and peculiar privilege of believers. The newly discovered negative theology, which, I fear, has done some damage to the Baptist denomination, and a very large amount of injury to the Independent body--the new heresy is to a large degree, founded upon the fiction of the Universal Fatherhood of God. The old divines, the Puritans, the Reformers, are now in these last days, to be superseded by men whose teaching flatly contradicts all that we have received of our forefathers. Our old ministers have all represented God as being to his people a father, to the rest of the world a judge. This is styled by our new philosophers as old cumbersome scheme of theology, and it is proposed that it be swept away--a proposition which will

never be carried out, while the earth remaineth, or while God endureth. But, at any rate, certain knight-errants have set themselves to do battle with windmills, and really believe that they shall actually destroy from the face of the earth that which is a fundamental and abiding distinction, without which the Scriptures are not to be understood. We are told by modern false prophets, that God in everything acts to all men as a father, even when he cast them into the lake of fire, and send upon them all the plagues that are written in his book. All these terrible things in righteousness, the awful proofs of holy vengeance in the judge of all the earth, and successfully neutralized in their arousing effect, by being quietly written among the loving acts and words of the Universal Father. It is dreamed that this is an age when men do not need to be thundered at; when everybody is become so tender-hearted that there is no need for the sword to be held "in terrorum" over mortals; but that everything is to be conducted now in a new and refined manner; God the Universal Father, and all men universal sons. Now I must confess there is something very pretty about this theory, something so fascinating that I do not wonder that some of the ablest minds have been wooed and won by it. I, for my part, take only one objection to it, which is that it is perfectly untrue and utterly unfounded, having not the lightest shadow of a pretence of being proved by the Word of God. Scripture everywhere represents the chosen people of the Lord, under their visible character of believers, penitents, and spiritual men, as being "the children of God," and to none but such is that holy title given. It speaks of the regenerate, of a special class me as having a claim to be God's children. Now, as there is nothing like Scripture, let me read you a few texts, Romans viii. 14.--"As many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Surely no one is so daring as to say, that all men are led by the

Spirit of God; yet may it readily enough be inferred from our text, that those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not the sons of God, but that they and they alone who are led, guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God. A passage from Galatians iii. 26.--"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," declaring as it seems to me, and rightly enough, that all believers, all who have faith in Christ are the children of God, and that they become actually and manifestly so by faith in Christ Jesus, and implying that those who have no faith in Christ Jesus, are not God's sons, and that any pretence which they could make to that relationship would be but arrogance and presumption. And hear ye this, John i. 12.--"To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." How could they have been the sons of God before, for "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,"--then they were not make the sons of God by mere creation--"nor of the will of the flesh," that is to say, not by any efforts of their own "but of God." If any text can be more conclusive than this against universal sonship, I must confess I know of none, and unless these words mean nothing at all, they do mean just this, that believers are the sons of God and none besides. But listen to another word of the Lord in the first epistle of John, iii. 1-.--"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth no righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Here are two sorts of children, therefore all are not the children of God. Can it be supposed that those who are the children of the devil are nevertheless the children of God? I must confess my reason revolts against such a supposition, and though I think I might exercise a little imagination, yet I could not make my imagination sufficiently an acrobat to conceive of a man

being at the same time a child of the devil, and yet a real child of God. Hear another, 2 Corinthians, vi. 17.--"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Is not that "coming out" necessary to sonship, and were they his sons, were they his daughters, had they any claim or right to call him Father, until they came out from the midst of a wicked world, and were separate? If so, why doth God promise them what they have already. But again, Matthew v. 9.-- "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A fine title indeed if it belongs to every man! Where is the blessedness of the title, for they might be lovers of strife, and yet according to modern theologians they might still be the sons of God. Let us mark a yet more positive passage, Romans ix. 8.--"The children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." What then is to be said to this, "These are not the children of God." If any man will contradict that flatly--well, be it so. I have no argument with which to convince the man who denies so strong and clear a witness. Listen to the divine apostle John, where in one of his epistles he is carried away in rhapsody of devout admiration, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." And then he goes on giving a description of those who are the sons of God, who could not mean any but those who by a living faith in Christ Jesus, have cast their souls once for all on him. As far as I can guess, the main text on which these people build the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood, is that quotation which the apostle Paul took from a heathen poet--"As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." The apostle endorses that sentiment by quoting it, and against that endorsement we can of course have no

contention; but the word there used for "offspring," expresses no idea of Fatherhood in the majestic sense of the term, it is a word which might be used as appropriately for the young of animals, the young of any other creature, it has not about it the human sympathies which belong to a father and a son. I know, besides this, nothing which could support this new theory. Possibly they fancy that creation is a paternal act, that all created things are sons. This is too absurd to need an answer, for if so, horses and cows, rats and mice, snakes and flies are children of God, for they are surely creatures as well as we. Taking away this corner-stone, this fancy theory tumbles to the ground, and that theory which seemed to be as tall as Babel, and threatened to make as much confusion, may right soon be demolished, if you will batter it with the Word of God. The fact is, brethren, that the relationship of a son of God belongs only to those who are "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of the Father's will:" Ephesians i. 5. The more you search the Bible, the more sure will you be that sonship is the special privilege of the chosen people of God and of none beside. Having thus, as far as I can, established my point, that the privilege of our text is a special one, let me dwell upon it for a moment and remark that, as a special one, it is an act of pure unmistakeable grace. No man has any right to be a son of God. If we are born into his family it is a miracle of mercy. It is one of the ever-blessed exhibitions of the infinite love of God which without any cause in us, has set itself upon us. If thou art this day an heir of heaven, remember, man, thou wast once the slave of hell. Once thou didst wallow in the mire, and if thou shouldst adopt a swine to be thy child, thou couldst not then have performed an act of greater compassion than when God adopted thee. And if an angel could exalt a gnat to equal dignity

with himself, yet would not the boon be such-an-one as that which God hath conferred on thee. He hath taken thee from the dunghill, and he hath set thee among princes. Thou hast lain among the pots, but he hat made thee as a dove whose wings are covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. Remember that this is grace, and parentage,--look back to the hole of the pit whence thou art digged, and the miry clay whence thou wast drawn. Boast not, if thou art in the true olive. Thou art not there, because of thine original, thou art a scion from an evil tree, and the Divine Spirit hath changed thy nature, for thou wast once nothing but a branch of the vine of Gomorrah. Ever let humility bow thee to the very earth while thine adoption lifts thee up to the third heaven.

Consider again, I pray you, what a dignity God hath conferred upon you--even upon you in making you his son. The tall archangel before the throne is not called God's Son, he is one of the most favoured of his servants, but not his child. I tell thee, thou poor brother in Christ, there is a dignity about thee that even angels may well envy. Thou in thy poverty art as a sparkling jewel in the darkness of the mine. Thou in the midst of thy sickness and infirmity art girt about with robes of glory, which make the spirits in heaven look down upon the earth with awe. Thou movest about this world as a prince among the crowd. The blood of heaven runs in thy veins; thou art one of the blood royal of eternity--a son of God, descendant of the King of kings. Speak of pedigrees, the glories of heraldry--thou hast more than heraldry could ever give thee, or all the pomp of ancestry could ever bestow.

II. And now I press forward to notice that in order that we may know whether we are partakers of this high--this royal relationship of children of God, the text furnishes us with a SPECIAL PROOF--"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children

of God. You will notice here, my beloved, that there are two witnesses in court--two who are ready to prove our filiation to the eternal God. The first witness is our spirit; the second witness is The Spirit, the eternal Spirit of God, who beareth witness with our spirit. It is as if a poor man were called into court to prove his right to some piece of land which was disputed. He standeth up and beareth his own faithful testimony; but some great one of the land--some nobleman who lives near--rises, stands in the witness box, and confirms his witness. So is it with our text. The plain, simple spirit of the humble-minded Christian cries, "I am God's child." The glorious Spirit, one with God, attests the truth of the testimony, and beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Let us notice in the first place, how it is that our spirit is able to bear witness; and as this is a matter of experience, I can only appeal to those who are the true children of God; for no others are competent to give testimony. Our spirit bears witness that we are the children of God, when it feels a filial love to God. When bowing before his throne we can boldly say "Abba Father."--"Thou art my father," then our spirit concludes that we are sons, for thus it argues, "I feel to thee as a child feeleth to its parent, and it could not be that I should have the feeling of a son if I had not the rights of a son--if I were not a child thou wouldst never have given to me that filial affection which no dares to call thee "Father."

Sometimes, too, the spirit feels that God is its Father not only by love but by trust. The rod has been upon our back and we have smarted very sore, but in the darkest hour we have been able to say, "The time is in my Father's hands; I cannot murmur; I would not repine; I feel it is but right that I should suffer, otherwise my Father would never have made me suffer." He surely doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the

children of man for nought; and when in these dark gloomy times we have looked up to a Father's face, and have said, "Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee; thy blows shall not drive thee from me; they shall but make me say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, and purge me from my sin."" Then our spirit beareth witness that we are the children of God.

And are there not times with you, my dear friends, when your hearts feel that they would be emptied and void, unless God were in them. You have perhaps received an increase to your wealth, and after the first flush of pleasure which was but natural, you have said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; this is not my joy." You have had many mercies in your family, but you have felt that in them all there was a lack of something which could satisfy your heart, and you have felt that that something was God. My God, thou art my all in all--the circle where my passions move, the centre of my soul. Now these longings--these pantings for something more than this world can give you--were but the evidences of a child-like spirit, which was panting after its Father's presence. You feel you must have your Father, or else the gifts of his providence are nothing to you. That is, your spirit beareth witness that you are the child of God. But there are times when the heir of heaven is as sure that he is God's child as he is sure that he is his own father's son. No doubt can make him question. The evil one may whisper, "If thou be the son of God." But he says, "Get thee hence, Satan, I know I am the son of God." A man might as well try to dispute him out of the fact of his existence as out of that equally sure fact that he has been born again, and that by gracious adoption he has been taken into the family of God. This is our witnessing that we are born of God.

But the text, you see, furnishes us with a higher witness than this.

God that cannot lie, in the person of the Holy Ghost, graciously condescendeth to say "Amen" to the testimony of our conscience. And whereas our experience sometimes leads our spirit to conclude that we are born of God, there are happy times when the eternal Spirit from off the throne, descends and fills our heart, and then we have the two witnesses bearing witness with each other, that we are children of God. Perhaps you ask me, how is this. I was reading a passage by Dr. Chalmers the other day, in which he says, that his own experience did not lead him to believe that the Holy Spirit ever gave any witness of our being the children of God, apart from the written Word of God, and his ordinary workings in our hearts. Now, I am not sure that the doctor is perfectly right. As far as his own experience went I dare say he was right, but there may be some far inferior to the doctor in genius, who nevertheless were superior in nearness of fellowship with God, and who could therefore go a little farther than the eloquent divine. Now, I do believe with him this morning, that the chief witness of God the Holy Spirit lies in this--the Holy Spirit has written this book which contains an account of what a Christian should be, and of the feelings which believers in Christ must have. I have certain experiences and feelings; turning to the Word, I find similar experiences and feelings recorded; and so I prove that I am right, and the Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am born of God. Suppose you have been enabled to believe in Jesus Christ for your salvation; that faith has produced love to Christ; that love to Christ has led you to work for Christ; you come to the Bible, and you find that this was just the very thing which was felt by early believers; and then you say, "Good Lord, I am thy son, because what I feel is what thou has said by the lips of thy servant must be felt by those who are thy children." So the Spirit confirms the witness of my spirit that I am born of God.

But again, everything that is good in a Christian you know to be the work of God the Holy Ghost. When at any time then the Holy Spirit comforts you--sheds a sweet calm over your disturbed spirit; when at any period he instructs you, opens to you a mystery you did not understand before; when at some special period he inspires you with an unwonted affection, an unusual faith in Christ; when you experience a hatred of sin, a faith in Jesus, a death to the world, and a life to God, these are the works of the Spirit. Now the Spirit never did work effectually in any but the children of God; and inasmuch as the Spirit works in you, he doth by that very working give his own infallible testimony to the fact that you are a child of God. If you had not been a child he would have left you where you were in your natural state; but inasmuch as he hath wrought in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure, he that put his stamp on you as being one of the family of the Most High. But I think must go a little further than this. I do believe that there is a supernatural way in which apart from means, the Spirit of God communicates with the spirit of man. My own little experience leads me to believe that apart from the Word of God, there are immediate dealings with the conscience and soul of man by the Holy Spirit, without any instrumentality, without even the agency of the truth. I believe that the Spirit of God sometimes comes into a mysterious and marvellous contact with the spirit of man, and that at times the Spirit speaketh in the heart of man by a voice not audible to the ear, but perfectly audible to the spirit which is the subject of it. he assures and consoles directly, by coming into immediate contact with the heart. It becomes our business then to take the Spirit's witness through his Word, and through his works, but I would seek to have immediate, actual, undivided fellowship with the Holy Ghost, who by his divine Spirit, should work in my spirit and convince me that I

am a child of God.

Now let me ask my congregation, do any of you know that you are God's children? Say not, "In my baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God." There are not many in England, I think, who believe those words. There may be a few who do, but it has never been my misfortune to meet with them. Every one knows that it is a disgrace to a matchless prayer-book, that such words should be permitted to stand there-words so infamously untrue that by their gross untruthfulness they cease to have the destructive effect which more cunning language might have produced, because the conscience of man revolts against the idea that the sprinkling of drops of water upon the infants's brow can ever make it a member of Christ, and a child of God. But I ask you, does your spirit say to-day "I am God's child." Do you feel the longings, the loves, the confidences of a child? If not, tremble, for there are but two vast families in this world. They are the family of God, and the family of Satan-- their character how different--their end, how strangely divided! But let me say again to thee, hast thou ever felt that the Holy Ghost has borne witness with thy spirit in his word, and in his work, in thee; and in that secret whisper has he ever said to thee, "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." I conjure thee, give no sleep to thine eyes, no slumber to thine eyelids, till by this divine mysterious agency, thou art new made, new born, and new begotten, and so admitted not only nominally but really into the living family of the living God.

III. I shall now pass on to my third point. If it be settled in our mind by the true witness--the spirit within us, and the Spirit of God,--that we are God's children, what a NOBLE PRIVILEGE now appears to our view. "HEIRS OF GOD, and joint heirs with Christ." It does not always follow in human reasoning "if children, then heirs," because in

our families but one is the heir. There is but one that can claim the heir's rights, and the heir's title. It is not so in the family of God. Man as a necessary piece of political policy, may give to the heir that which surely he can have not more real right to in the sight of God, than the rest of the family--may give him all the inheritance, while his brethren, equally true born, may go without; but it is not so in the family of God. All God's children are heirs, however numerous the family, and he that shall be born of God last, shall be as much his heir as he who was born first. Abel, the protomartyr, entering alone into heaven, shall not have a more secure title to the inheritance than he who, last of woman born, shall trust in Christ, and then ascend into his glory. In heaven's logic it is true, "if children, then heirs."

And see what it is that we are heirs of. The apostle opens with the grandest part of the inheritance first--heirs of God--heirs not of God's gifts, and God's works, but heirs of God himself. It was said of king Cyrus, that he was a prince of so amiable a disposition, that when at any time he sat down at meat, if there were aught that pleased his appetite, he would order it to be taken away and given to his friends with this message, "King Cyrus found that this food pleased his palate, and he thought his friend should feed upon that which he enjoyed himself." This was thought to be a singular instance of his affability, and his kindness to his courtiers. But our God doeth more than this, he doth not send merely bread from his table, as in the day when man did eat angel's food; he doth not give us merely to drink the wines on the lees well refined--the rich wines of heaven--but he gives himself himself to us. And the believer is to be the heir, I say, not merely of God's works, not simply of God's gifts, but of God himself. Talk we of his omnipotence?--his Allmightiness is ours. Speak we of his omniscience?--all his wisdom is engaged in our behalf. Do we say that

he is love?--that love belongs to us. Can we glory that he is full of immutability, and changes not?--that eternal unchangeableness is engaged for the defence of the people of God. All the attributes of divinity are the property of God's children--their inheritance entailed upon them. Nay, he himself is ours. Oh what riches! If we could say this morning, that all the stars belong to us; if we could turn the telescope to the most remote of the fixed stars, and then could say with the pride of possession, so natural to man, "That star, a thousand times bigger than the sun, is mine. I am the king of that inheritance, and without me doth not a dog move his tongue." If we could then sweep the telescope along the milky way, and see the millions upon millions of stars that lie clustered together there, and could cry, "All these are mine," yet these possessions were but a speck compared with that which is in the text. Heir of God! He to whom all these things are but as nothing, gives himself up to the inheritance of his people.

Note yet a little further concerning the special privilege of heirship,--we are joint heirs with Christ. That is, whatever Christ possesses, as heir of all things, belongs to us. Splendid must be the inheritance of Jesus Christ. Is he not very God of very God, Jehovah's only begotten Son, Most High and glorious, though he bowed himself to the grave and became the Servant of servants, yet God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

Oh! what angelic tongue shall hymn his glory? What fiery lips shall ever speak of his possessions, of his riches,--the unsearchable riches of God in Christ Jesus. But, beloved, all that belongs to Christ belongs to Christ's people. It is as when a man doth marry. His possessions shall be shared by his spouse; and when Christ took his Church unto himself he endowed her with all his goods, both temporal and eternal. He gives to us his raiments, and thus we stand arrayed.

His righteousness becomes our beauty. He gave to us his person, it has become our meat and our drink; we eat his flesh and drink his blood. He gave to us hi inmost heart; he loved us even to the death. He gave to us his crown; he gave to us his throne; for "to him that overcometh will I give to sit upon my throne, even as I have overcome, and have sat down with my Father upon his throne." He gave to us his heaven, for "where I am, there shall my people be." He gave to us the fulness of his joy, for "my joy shall be in you, that your joy may be full." I repeat it, there is nothing in the highest heaven which Christ has reserved unto himself, "for all things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

I cannot stay longer on that point, except just to notice, that we must never quarrel with this divine arrangement. "Oh," say you, "we never shall." Stay, stay, brother; I have known you do so already, for when all that is Christ's belongs to you, do ye forget that Christ once had a cross, and that belongs to you? Christ once wore a thorny crown, and if you are to have all that he has, you must bear the thorny crown too? Have you forgotten that he had shame and spitting, the reproach, the rebuke of men, and that he conceived all those to be greater riches than all the treasures of this world? Come, I know as you look down the inventory, you are apt to look a little askance on that cross, and you think, "Well, the crown is glorious, but I love not the spittle, I care not to be despised and rejected of men." Oh! you are quarreling with this divine arrangement, you are beginning to differ with this blessed policy of God. Why, one would have thought you would rejoice to take your Master for better or for worse, and to be partaker with him, not only in his glories but in his sufferings. So it must be, "If so be that we suffer with him that we also may be glorified together." Is there a place into which your Master went that you would be ashamed to

enter? If so, methinks your heart is not in a right state. Would you refuse to go with him to the garden of his agony? Believer, would you be ashamed to stand and be accused as he was, and have false witness born against you? And would you blush to sit side- by-side with him, and be made nothing of as he was? Oh, when you start aside at a little jest, let your conscience prick you, and say, "Am I not a joint heir with Christ, and am I about to quarrel with the legacy? Did he not say, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world?" And oh, would you be ashamed to die for Christ; methinks, if you are what you should be, you will glory in tribulations also, and count it sweet to suffer for Christ. I know the world turns this into ridicule and says, "That the hypocrite loves persecution;" no, not the hypocrite, but the true believer; he feels that though the suffering must ever be painful, yet for Christ's sake, it becomes so glorious that the pain is all forgotten.

Come, believer, will you be partaker with Christ to-day in the battle, and then divide this spoil with him? Come, will you wade with him through the deep waters, and then at last climb up the topless hills with him? Are you prepared now to be despised and rejected of men that you may at last ascend up on high, leading captivity captive? The inheritance cannot be divided; if you will have the glory, you must have the shame. He that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. Come, men, put your face against all weathers; be ready to come up hill, with the snow blowing in your face, be ready to march on when the tempest howls, and the lightnings flash over head, and the snow becomes knee-deep; nay, be ready to go into the crevasse with him, and perish, if need be. Who quarrels with this sacred regulation? Certainly no true child of God; he would not have it altered, even if he might.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which briefly but I hope interestingly. The SPECIAL CONDUCT naturally expected from those who are partakers of the peculiar privileges of being the children of God. In the golden age of Rome, if a man were tempted to dishonesty, he would stand upright, look the tempter in the face, and say to him, "I am a Roman." He thought that a sufficient reason why he should neither lie nor cheat. It ought to be ten times more than sufficient answer to every temptation, for a man to be able to say, "I am a son of God; shall such a man as I yield to sin?" I have been astonished in looking though old Roman history at the wonderful prodigies of integrity and valour which were produced by idolatry, or rather, which were produced by patriotism, and that principle which ruled the Romans, namely, love of fame. And I say it this morning, it is a shameful thing that ever idolatry should be able to breed better men than some who profess Christianity. And I think I may stand firmly while I argue here, that if a Roman, a worshipper of Jupiter or Saturn, became great or glorious, a Son of God ought to be nobler far. Look ye, sirs, at Brutus; he has established a republic, he has put down tyranny, he sits upon the judgment seat; his two sons are brought before him, they have been traitors to the commonwealth. What will the father do? He is a man of a loving heart and loves his sons, but there they stand. Will he execute justice as a judge, or will he prefer his family to his country? He covers his face for a moment with his hands, and then looking down at his sons, and finding that the testimony is complete against them, he says, "Lictors, do your work." They bare their backs, the rod scourgeth them. "Complete the sentence, lictors;" and their heads are smitten off in the father's presence. Stern justice swayed his spirit, and no other feeling could for a single moment make him turn aside. Christian men, do you feel this with regard to your sins.

When you have been sitting on the judgment bench; there has been some favourite sin brought up, and you have, oh, let me blush to say it, you have wished to spare it, it was so near your heart, you have wished to let it live, whereas should you not as the son of God have said, "If my eye offend me, I will pluck it out and cast it from me, if my right hand offend me, I will cut it off, rather than I should in anything offend my God." Brutus slays his sons; but some Christians would spare their sins. Look again at that noble youth, Mutius Scoevola. He goes into the tent of King Pyrrhus with the intention to put him to death, because he is the enemy of his country; he slays the wrong man; Pyrrhus orders him to be taken captive. A pan of hot coals is blazing in the tent; Scoevola puts out his right hand and holds it; it crackles in the flame; the young man flinches not, though his fingers drop away. "There are 400 youths," says he, "in Rome as brave as I am, and that will bear fire as well; and tyrant," he says "you will surely die."" Yet here are Christian men, who, if they are a little sneered at, or snubbed, or get the cold shoulder for Christ's sake, are half ashamed of their profession, and would go and hide it. And if they are not like Peter--tempted to curse and swear to escape the blessed imputation--they would turn the conversation, that they might not suffer for Christ. Oh for 400 Scoevolas, 400 men who for Christ's sake would burn, not their right hands, but their bodies, if indeed Christ's name night be glorified, and sin might be stabbed to the heart. Or, read you that old legend of Curtius, the Roman knight. A great gulf had opened in the Forum, perhaps caused by an earthquake, and the auspices had said that the chasm could never be filled up, except the most precious thing in Rome could be cast into it. Curtius puts on his helmet, and his armour, mounts his horse and leaps into the cleft, which is said to have filled at once, because courage, valour, and

patriotism, were the best things in Rome. I wonder how many Christians there are who would leap like that into the cleft. Why, I see you, sirs, if there is a new and perilous work to be done for Christ, you like to be in the rear rank this time; if there were something honourable, so that you might ride on with your well caparisoned steeds in the midst of the dainty ranks ye would do it; but to leap into certain annihilation for Christ's sake--Oh! heroism, where is it fled--whither has it gone. Thou Church of God, surely it must survive in thee; for to whom should it more belong to die and sacrifice all, than to those who are the sons of God. Look ye again at Camillus. Camillus had been banished from Rome by false accusations. He was ill-treated, abused, and slandered, and went away to retirement. Suddenly the Goths, the old enemies of Rome, fell upon the city. They surrounded it; they were about to sack it, and Camillus was the only man who could deliver it. Some would have said within themselves "Let the caitiff nation be cut off. The city has turned me out; let it rue the day that it ever drove me away." But no, Camillus gathers together his body of followers, falls upon the Goths, routs them and enters in triumph into Rome though he was an exile. Oh Christian, this should ever be your spirit, only in a higher degree. When the Church rejects you, casts you out, annoys, despises you, still be ready to defend her, and when you have an ill name even in the lips of God's people, still stand up for the common cause of Zion, the city of our solemnities. Or look you at Cincinnatus. He is chosen Dictator, but as soon as ever his dictatorship is over he retires to his little farm of three acres, and goes to his plough, and when he is wanted to be absolute monarch of Rome he is found at his plough upon his three acres of land and his little cottage. He served his country, not for himself, but for his country's sake; and can it be that you will not be poor yet honest for

Christ's sake! Will you descend to the tricks of trade to win money. Ah, then, the Roman eclipses the Christian. Will you not be satisfied to serve God though you lose by it; to stand up and be thought an arrant fool, because you will not learn the wisdom of this world; to be esteemed a mad fanatic, because you cannot swim with the current. Can you not do it? Can you not do it? Then again I say to you, "Tell it not in Gath and publish it not in Askelon, then has a heathen eclipsed a Christian." May the sons of God be greater than the sons of Romulus. One other instance let me give you. You have heard of Regulus the Roman general; he was taken prisoner by Carthagenians, who anxiously wished for peace. They told him to go home to Rome, and see if he could not make peace. But his reply was, "No, I trust they will always be at war with you, for Carthage must be destroyed if Rome is to prosper." They compelled him, however, to go, exacting from him this promise, that if the Romans did not make peace he would come back, and if he came back they would put him to death in the most horrid manner that ever cruelty could invent. Regulus returns to Rome; he stands up in the senate and conjures them never to make peace in Carthage, but ot his wife and children, and tells them that he is going back to Carthage, and of course the tell him that he need not keep faith with an enemy. I imagine that he said, "I promised to go back, and though it is to pangs indescribable, I will return." His wife clings to his shoulder, his children seek to persuade him; they attend him to the waters' edge; he sails for Carthage; his death was too horrible to be described. Never martyr suffered more for Christ than that man suffered for his word's sake. And shall a Christian man break his promise? shall a son of God be less true than a Roman or a heathen? Shall it be, I say, that integrity shall be found in heathen lands and not be found here? No. May you be holy, harmless, sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of

a crooked and perverse generation. I used this argument; I thought it might be a new one; I am sure it is a forcible one. You cannot imagine, surely, that God is to allow heathens to eclipse his children. Oh! never let it be so. So live, so act, ye sons of God, that the world may say of you, "Yes, these men bring forth the fruits of God; they are like their Father; they honour his name; they are indeed filled with his grace, for their every word is as true as his oath; their every act is sincere and upright; their heart is kind, their spirit is gentle; they are firm but yet they are generous; they are strict in their integrity, but they are loving in their souls; they are men who, like God, are full of love; but like him are severely just. They are sternly holy; they are, like him, ready to forgive, but they can by no means tolerate iniquity, nor hear that sin should live in their presence."

God bless you, ye sons of God, and may those of you who are strangers to him, be convinced and converted by this sermon, and seek that grace by which alone you can have your prayer fulfilled:--

"With them numbered may we be,
Now and through eternity."

Chapter 51

"Magnificat"

A Sermon

(No. 340)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 14th, 1860, by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Awake, awake, Deborah; quake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."--Judges 5:12.

ANY OF THE SAINTS of God are as mournful as if they were captives in Babylon, for their life is spent in tears and sighing. They will not chant the joyous psalm of praise, and if there be any that require of them a song, they reply, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" But, my brethren, we are not captives in Babylon; we do not sit down to weep by Babel's streams; "the Lord hath broken our captivity, he hath brought us up out of the house of our bondage. We are freemen; we are not slaves; we are not sold into the hand of cruel taskmasters, but we that have believed do enter into rest:" Hebrews 4:3. Moses could not give rest to Israel; he could bring them to Jordan, but across the stream he could not conduct them; Joshua alone could lead them into the lot of their inheritance, and our Joshua, our Jesus, has led us into the land of promise. He hath brought us into a land which the Lord our God thinketh on; a land of hills and valleys; a land that floweth with milk and honey; and though the Canaanites still be in the land, and plague us full sore, yet is it all our own, and he hath said unto us, "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 ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's:" 1 Corinthians

3:21-23. We are not, I say, captives, sold under sin; we are a people who sit every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree, none making us afraid. We dwell in "a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks:" Isaiah 26:1. We have come unto Zion, the city of our solemnities, and the mourning of Babylon is not suitable to the palace of the great King, which is beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth. "Let us serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with singing:" Psalm 100:2. Many of God's people live as if their God were dead. Their conduct would be quite consistent if the promises were not yea and amen; if God were a faithless God. If Christ were not a perfect Redeemer; if the Word of God might after all turn out to be untrue; if he had not power to keep his people, and if he had not love enough with which to hold them even to the end, then might they give way to mourning and to despair; then might they cover their heads with ashes, and wrap their loins about with sackcloth. But while God is Jehovah, just and true; while his promises stand as fast as the eternal mountians; while the heart of Jesus is true to his spouse; while the arm of God is unpalsied, and his eye undimmed; while his covenant and his oath are unbroken and unchanged; It is not comely, it is not seemly for the upright to go mourning all their days. Ye children of God, refrain yourselves from weeping, and make a joyful noise unto the Rock of your salvation; let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.

"Your harps, ye trembling saints,
Down from the willows take;
Loud to the praise of love divine,
Bid every string awake."

First, I shall urge upon you a stirring up of all your powers to sacred song. "Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song." In the

second place, I shall persuade you to practice a sacred leading of your captivity captive. "Arise, Barrak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."

I. First, then, A STIRRING UP OF ALL OUR POWERS TO PRAISE GOD, according to the words of the holy woman in the text, "Awake, awake,"--repeated yet again "Awake, awake."

1. WHAT is there that we need to awaken if we would praise God? I reply, we ought to arouse all the bodily powers. Our flesh is sluggish; we have been busy with the world, our limbs have grown fatigued, but there is power in divine joy to arouse even the body itself, to make the heavy eyelids light, to reanimate the drowsy eye, and quicken the weary brain. We should call upon our bodies to awake, especially our tongue, "the glory of our frame." Let it put itself in tune like David's harp of old. A toilworn body often makes a mournful heart. The flesh has such a connection with the spirit, that it often boweth down the soul. Come, then, my flesh, I charge thee, awake. Blood, leap in my veins? Heart, let thy pulsings be as the joy-strokes of Miriam's timbrel! Oh, all my bodily frame, stir up thyself now, and begin to magnify and bless the Lord, who made thee, and who has kept thee in health, and preserved thee from going down into the grave.

Surely we should call on all our mental powers to awake. Wake up my memory and find matter for the song. Tell what God has done for me in days gone by. Fly back ye thoughts to my childhood; sing of cradle mercies. Review my youth and its early favors. Sing of longsuffering grace, which followed my wandering, and bore with my rebellions. Revive before my eyes that gladsome hour when first I knew the Lord, and tell o'er again the matchless story of the "Streams of mercy never ceasing," which have flowed to me since then, and which "Call for songs of loudest praise." Awake up my judgment and give measure to the music.

Come forth my understanding, and weigh his lovingkindness in scales, and his goodness in the balances. See if thou canst count the small dust of his mercies. See if thou canst understand the riches unsearchable which he hath given to thee in that unspeakable gift of Christ Jesus my Lord. Reckon up his eternal mercies to thee--the treasures of that covenant which he made on thy behalf, ere thou wast born. Sing, my understanding, sing aloud of that matchless wisdom which contrived--of that divine love which planned, and of that eternal grace which carried out the scheme of thy redemption. Awake, my imagination, and dance to the holy melody. Gather pictures from all worlds. Bid sun and moon stay in their courses, and join in thy new song. Constrain the stars to yield the music of the spheres; put a tongue into every mountain, and a voice into every wilderness; translate the lowing of the cattle and the scream of the eagle; hear thou the praise of God in the rippling of the rills, the dashing of the cataracts, and the roaring of the sea, until all his works in all places of his dominion bless the Lord.

But especially let us cry to all the graces of our spirit--"awake." Wake up, my love, for thou must strike the key-note and lead the strain. Awake and sing unto thy beloved a song touching thy well-beloved. Give unto him choice canticles, for he is the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Come forth then with thy richest music, and praise the name which is as ointment poured forth. Wake up, my hope, and join hands with thy sister--love; and sing of blessings yet to come. Sing of my dying hour, when he shall be with me on my couch. Sing of the rising morning, when my body shall leap from its tomb into her Savior's arms! Sing of the expected advent, for which thou lookest with delight! And, O my soul, sing of that heaven which he has gone before to prepare for thee, "that where he is, there may his

people be." Awake my love--awake my hope--and thou my faith, awake also! Love has the sweetest voice, hope can thrill forth the higher notes of the saved scale; but thou, O faith--with thy deep resounding base melody--thou must complete the song. Sing of the promise sure and certain. Rehearse the glories of the covenant ordered in all things, and sure. Rejoice in the sure mercies of David! Sing of the goodness which shall be known to thee in all thy trials yet to come. Sing of that blood which has sealed and ratified every word of God. Glory in that eternal faithfulness which cannot lie, and of that truth which cannot fail. And thou, my patience, utter thy gentle but most gladsome hymn. Sing to-day of how he helped thee to endure in sorrows' bitterest hour. Sing of the weary way along which he has borne thy feet, and brought thee at last to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. Oh, all my graces, heaven-begotten as ye are, praise him who did beget you. Ye children of his grace, sing unto your Father's name, and magnify him who keeps you alive. Let all that in me is be stirred up to magnify and bless his holy name.

Then let us wake up the energy of all those powers--the energy of the body, the energy of the mind, the energy of the spirit. You know what it is to do a thing coldly, weakly. As well might we not praise at all. You know also what it is to praise God passionately--to throw energy into all the song, and so to exult in his name. So do ye, each one of you, this day; and if Michal, Saul's daughter, should look out of the window and see David dancing before the ark with all his might, and should chide you as though your praise were unseemly, say unto her, "It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, therefore will I play before the Lord:" 2 Samuel 6:21. Tell the enemy that the God of election must be praised, that the God of redemption must be extolled,--that if the very heathen leaped for joy

before their gods, surely they who bow before Jehovah must adore him with rapture and with ecstacy. Go forth, go forth with joy then, with all your energies thoroughly awakened for his praise.

2. But you say unto me, "WHY and wherefore should we this day awake and sing unto our God?" There be many reasons; and if your hearts be right, one may well satisfy. Come, ye children of God, and bless his dear name; for doth not all nature around you sing? If you were silent, you would be an exception to the universe. Doth not the thunder praise him as it rolls like drums in the march of the God of armies? Doth not the ocean praise him as it claps its thousand hands? Doth not the sea roar, and the fullness thereof? Do not the mountains praise him when the shaggy woods upon their summits wave in adoration? Do not the lightnings write his name in letters of fire upon the midnight darkness? Doth not this world, in its unceasing revolutions, perpetually roll forth his praise? Hath not the whole earth a voice, and shall we be silent? Shall man, for whom the world was made, and suns and stars were created,--shall he be dumb? No, let him lead the strain. Let him be the world's high priest, and while the world shall be as the sacrifice, let him add his heart thereto, and thus supply the fire of love which shall make that sacrifice smoke towards heaven.

But, believer, shall not thy God be praised? I ask thee. Shall not thy God be praised? When men behold a hero, they fall at his feet and honor him. Garibaldi emancipates a nation, and lo, they bow before him and do him homage. And thou Jesus, the Redeemer of the multitudes of thine elect, shalt thou have no song? Shalt thou have no triumphal entry into our hearts? Shall thy name have no glory? Shall the world love its own, and shall not the Church honor its own Redeemer? Our God must be praised. He shall be. If no other heart should ever praise him, surely mine must. If creation should forget him, his redeemed must remember

him. Tell us to be silent? Oh, we cannot. Bid us restrain our holy mirth? Indeed you bid us do an impossibility. He is God, and he must be extolled; he is our God, our gracious, our tender, our faithful God, and he must have the best of our songs.

Thou sayest, believer, why should I praise him? Let me ask thee a question too. Is it not heaven's employment to praise him? And what can make earth more like heaven, than to bring down from heaven the employment of glory, and to be occupied with it here? Come, believer, when thou prayest, thou art but a man, but when thou praisest, thou art as an angel. When thou asketh favor, thou art but a beggar, but when thou standest up to extol, thou becomest next of kin to cherubim and seraphim. Happy, happy day, when the glorious choristers shall find their numbers swelled by the addition of multitudes from earth! Happy day when you and I shall join the eternal chorus. Let us begin the music here. Let us strike some of the first notes at least; and if we cannot sound the full thunders of the eternal hallelujah, let us join as best we may. Let us make the wilderness and the solitary place rejoice, and bid the desert blossom as the rose.

Besides, Christian, dost thou not know that it is a good thing for thee to praise thy God? Mourning weakens thee, doubts destroy thy strength; thy groping among the ashes makes thee of the earth, earthy. Arise, for praise is pleasant and profitable to thee. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." "Delight thyself in the Lord and he will give thee the desire of thine heart." Thou growest in grace when thou growest in holy joy; thou art more heavenly, more spiritual, more Godlike, as thou gettest more full of joy and peace in believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. I know some Christians are afraid of gladness, but I read, "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." If murmuring were a duty, some saints would never sin, and if mourning were commanded by

God they would certainly be saved by works, for they are always sorrowing, and so they would keep his law. Instead thereof the Lord hath said it, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice;" and he has added, to make it still more strong, "Rejoice evermore." But I ask you one other question, believer. Thou sayest, "Why should I awake, this morning to sing unto my God?" I reply to thee, "Hast thou not a cause?" Hath he not done great things for thee, and art thou not glad thereof? Hath he not taken thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; hath he not set thy feet upon a rock and established thy goings, and is there no new song in thy mouth? What, art thou bought with blood, and yet hast thou a silent tongue? Loved of thy God before the world began and yet not sing his praise! What, art thou his child, an heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ, and yet no notes of gratitude? What I has he fed thee this day? Did he deliver thee yesterday out of many troubles? Has he been with thee these thirty, these forty, these fifty years in the wilderness, and yet hast thou no mercy for which to praise him? O shame on thy ungrateful heart, and thy forgetful spirit; come pluck up courage, think of thy mercies and not of thy miseries, forget thy pains awhile and think of thy many deliverances. Put thy feet on the neck of thy doubts and thy fears, and God the Holy Ghost, being thy Comforter, begin from this good hour to utter a song.

3. "But," smith one, "WHEN shall I do this? When shall I praise my God?" I answer, praise ye the Lord all his people, at all times, and give thanks at every remembrance of him. Extol him even when your souls are drowsy and your spirits are inclined to sleep. When we are awake there is little cause to say to us four times, "Awake, awake, awake, awake, utter a song;" but when we feel most drowsy with sorrow and our eyelids are heavy, when afflictions sore are pressing us down to the

very dust, then is the time to sing psalms unto our God and praise him in the very fire. But this takes much grace, and I trust brethren you know that there is much grace to be had. Seek it of your divine Lord, and be not content without it; be not easily cast down by troubles, nor soon made silent because of your woes; think of the martyrs of old, who sang sweetly at the stake; think of Ann Askew, of all the pains she bore for Christ, and then of her courageous praise of God in her last moments. Often she had been tortured, tortured most terribly; she lay in prison expecting death, and when there she wrote a verse in old English words and rhyme,

"I am not she that lyst
My anker to let fall,
For every dryslynge myst;
My shippe's substancyal."

Meaning thereby, that she would not stop her course and cast her anchor for every drizzling mist; she had a ship that could bear a storm, one that could break all the waves that beat against it, and joyously cut through the foam. So shall it be with you. Give not God fine weather songs, give him black tempest praises; give him not merely summer music, as some birds will do and then fly away; give him winter tunes. Sing in the night like the nightingales, praise him in the fires, sing his high praises even in the shadow of death, and let the tomb resound with the shouts of your sure confidence. So may you give to God what God may well claim at your hands.

When shall you praise him? Why, praise him when you are full of doubts, even when temptations assail you, when poverty hovers round you, and when sickness bows you down. They are cheap songs which we give to God when we are rich; it is easy enough to kiss the hand of a giving God, but to bless him when he takes away--this is to bless him indeed. To

cry like Job, "though he slay me yet will I trust in him," or to sing like Habukkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Oh Christian, thou askest me when thou shalt rejoice, I say to-day, "Awake, awake, O Deborah, awake, awake, utter a song."

4. Yet once more, you reply to me, "But HOW can I praise my God?" I will be teacher of music to thee, and may the Comforter be with me. Wilt thou think this morning how great are thy mercies. Thou art not blind, nor deaf, nor dumb; thou art not a lunatic; thou art not decrepid; thou art not vexed with piercing pains; thou art not full of agony caused by disease; thou art not going down to the grave; thou art not in torments, not in hell. Thou art still in the land of the living, the land of love, the land of grace, the land of hope. 'Even if this were all, there were enough reason for thee to praise thy God. Thou art not this day what thou once wert, a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious; the song of the drunkard is not on thy lips, the lascivious desire is not in thy heart. And is not this a theme for praise. Remember but a little while ago, with very many of you, all these sins were your delight and your joy. Oh! must not you praise him, ye chief of sinners, whose natures have been changed, whose hearts have been renewed. Ye sons of Korah, lead the sacred song! Bethink you of your iniquities, which have all been put away, and your transgressions covered, and none of them laid to your charge; think of the privileges you this day enjoy; elect, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, adopted, and preserved in Christ Jesus. Why man, if a stone or rock could but for a moment have such privileges as these, the very adamant

must melt and the dumb rock give forth hosannas. And will you be still when your mercies are so great! Let them not lie--"Forgotten in unthankfulness, and without praises die." Bethink thee yet again how little are thy trials after all. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. Thou art poor, it is true, but then thou art not sick; or thou art sick, but still thou art not left to wallow in sin; and all afflictions are but little when once sin is put away. Compare thy trials with those of many who live in thine own neighborhood. Put thy sufferings side by side with the sufferings of some whom thou hast seen on their dying bed; compare thy lot with that of the martyrs who have entered into their rest; and oh I say, thou wilt be compelled to exclaim with Paul, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." Come, now, I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, be of good cheer, and rejoice in the Lord your God, if it were for no other reason than that of the brave-hearted Luther. When he had been most slandered--when the Pope had launched out a new bull, and when the kings of the earth had threatened him fiercely--Luther would gather together his friends, and say, "Come let us sing a psalm and spite the devil." He would ever sing the most psalms when the world roared the most. Let us today join in that favourite psalm of the great German, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried in the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."--Psalm 46:I say, then, sing to make Satan angry. He has vexed the saints; let us vex him.

Praise ye the Lord to put the world to the blush. Never let it be said that the world can make its votaries more happy than Christ can make

his followers. Oh, let your songs be so continual, and so sweet, that the wicked may be compelled to say, "That man's life is happier than mine; I long to exchange with him. There is a something in his religion which my sin and my wicked pleasures can never afford me." O praise the Lord ye saints, that sinners' mouths may be set a watering after the things of God. Specially praise him in your trials, if you would make the world wonder--strike sinners dumb, and make them long to know and taste the joys of which you are a partaker.

"Alas!" said one, "but I cannot sing; I have nothing to sing of, nothing without for which I could praise God." It is remarked by old commentators that the windows of Solomon's temple were narrow on the outside, but that they were broad within, and that they were so cut, that though they seemed to be but small openings, yet the light was well diffused. (See Hebrew of 1 Kings 6:4.) So is it with the windows of a believer's joy. They may look very narrow without, but they are very wide within; there is more joy to be gotten from that which is within us than from that which is without us. God's grace within, God's love, the witness of his Spirit in our hearts, are better themes of joy than all the corn and wine, and oil, with which God sometimes increases his saints. So if thou hast no outward mercies, sing of inward mercies. If the water fail without, go to that fons perennis, that perpetual fountain which is within thine own soul. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." Proverbs 14:14. When thou seest no cheering providence without, yet look at grace within. "Awake, awake, Deborah! awake, awake, utter a song."

II. I now turn to the second part of my subject, upon which very briefly. I know not whether you feel as I do, but in preaching upon this theme, I mourn a scantiness of words, and a slowness of language. If I could let my heart talk without my lips, methinks with God's

Spirit I could move you indeed with joy. But these lips find that the language of the heart is above them. The tongue discovereth that it cannot reach the fullness of joy that is within. Let it beam from my face, if it cannot be spoken from my mouth.

And now the second part of the subject. "ARISE, BARAK, AND LEAD THY CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, THOU SON OF ABINOAM."

You understand the exact picture here. Barak had routed Sisera, Jabin's captain, and all his hosts. She now exhorts Barak to celebrate his triumph. "Mount, mount thy car, O Barak, and ride through the midst of the people. Let the corpse of Sisera, with Jael's nail driven through its temples, be dragged behind thy chariot. Let the thousand captives of the Canaanites walk all of them with their arms bound behind them. Drive before thee the ten thousand flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle which thou hast taken as a spoil. Let their chariots of iron, and all their horses be led captive in grand procession. Bring up all the treasures and the jewels of which thou hast stripped the slain; their armor, their shields, their spears, bound up as glorious trophies. Arise, Barak, lead captive those who led thee captive, and celebrate thy glorious victory."

Beloved, this is a picture which is often used in Scripture. Christ is said to have led captivity captive, when he ascended on high. He led principalities and powers captive at his chariot-wheels. But here is a picture for us--not concerning Christ, but concerning ourselves. We are exhorted to-day to lead captivity captive. Come up, come up, ye grim hosts of sins, once my terror and dismay. Long was I your slave, O ye Egyptian tyrants; long did this back smart beneath your lash when conscience was awakened, and long did these members of my body yield themselves as willing servants to obey your dictates. Come up ye sins, come up for ye are prisoners now; ye are bound in fetters of iron, nay,

more than this, ye are utterly slain, consumed, destroyed; you have been covered with Jesus' blood; ye have been blotted out by his mercy ye have been cast by his power into the depths of the sea, yet would I bid your ghosts come up, slain though ye be, and walk in grim procession behind my chariot. Arise, celebrate your triumph, oh ye people of God. Your sins are many, but they are all forgiven. Your iniquities are great, but they are all put away. Arise and lead captive those who led you captive--your blasphemies, your forgetfulness of God, your drunkenness, your lust, all the vast legion that once oppressed you. They are all clean destroyed. Come and look upon them, sing their death psalm, and chant the life psalm of your grateful joy; lead your sins captive this very day.

Bring hither in bondage another host who once seemed too many for us, but whom by God's grace we have totally overcome. Arise my trials; ye have been very great and very numerous; ye came against me as a great host, and ye were tall and strong like the sons of Anak. Oh! my soul, thou hast trodden down strength; by the help of our God have we leaped over a wall; by his power have we broken through the troops of our troubles, our difficulties, and our fears. Come now, look back, and think of all the trials you have ever encountered. Death in your family; losses in your business; afflictions in your body; despair in your soul; and yet here you are, more than conquerors over them all. Come, bid them all walk now in procession. To the God of our deliverances--who has delivered us out of deep waters--who has brought us out of the burning, fiery furnace, so that not the smell of fire has passed upon us--to him be all the glory, while we lead our captivity captive.

Arise and let us lead captive all our temptations. You, my brethren, have been foully tempted to the vilest sins. Satan has shot a thousand

darts at you, and hurled his javelin multitudes of times; bring out the darts and snap them before his eyes, for he has never been able to reach your heart. Come, break the bow and cut the spear in sunder; burn the chariot in the fire. "Thy right hand, O Lord, thy right hand O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy; thou hast broken, thou hast put to confusion them that hated us; thou hast scattered the tempters, and driven them far away "Come, ye children of God, kept and preserved where so many have fallen, lead now this day your temptations captive. I think that you as a church, and I as your minister, can indeed lead captivity captive this day. There has been no single church of God existing in England for these fifty years which has had to pass through more trial than we have done. We can say, "Men did ride over our heads." We went through fire and through water, and what has been the result of it all? God hath brought us out into a wealthy place and set our feet in a large room, and all the devices of the enemy have been of none effect. Scarce a day rolls over my head in which the most villainous abuse, the most fearful slander is not uttered against me both privately and by the public press; every engine is employed to put down God's minister--every lie that man can invent is hurled at me. But hitherto the Lord hath helped me. I have never answered any man, nor spoken a word in my own defense. from the first day even until now. And the effect has been this: God's people have believed nothing against me; they who feared the Lord have said often as a new falsehood has been uttered, "This is not true concerning that man; he will not answer for himself, but God will answer for him." They have not checked our usefulness as a church; they have not thinned our congregations; that which was to be but a spasm--an enthusiasm which it was hoped would only last an hour--God has daily increased; not because of me, but because of that gospel which I preach; not because there was anything

in me, but because I came out as the exponent of plain, straight-forward, honest Calvinism, and because I seek to speak the Word simply, not according to the critical dictates of man, but so that the poor may comprehend what I have to say. The Lord has helped us as a church; everything has contributed to help us; the great and terrible catastrophe invented by Satan to overturn us, was only blessed of God to swell the stream; and now I would not stay a liar's mouth if I could, nor would I stop a slanderer if it were in my power, except it were that he might not sin, for all these things tend to our profit, and all these attacks do but widen the stream of usefulness. Many a sinner has been converted to God in this hall who was first brought here, because of some strange anecdote, some lying tale which had been told of God's servant, the minister. I say it boasting in the Lord my God, this morning, though I become a fool in glorying, I do lead in God's name my captivity captive. Arise! arise! ye members of this church, ye who have followed the son of Barak, and have gone up as the thousands at his feet; arise and triumph for God is with us, and his cause shall prosper; his own right arm is made bare in the eyes of all the people, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

As it is in this single church, and in our own individual sphere, so shall it be in the church at large. God's ministers are all attacked; God's truth is everywhere assailed. A terrible battle awaits us; but oh! Church of God, remember thy former victories. Awake, ministers of Christ, and lead your captivity captive. Sing how the idols of Greece tottered before you. Say, "Where is Diana? Where now the gods that made glad Ephesus of old?" And thou, O Rome, was not thine arm broken before the majesty of the Church's might? Where now is Jupiter; where Saturn, where Venus? They have ceased to be. And thou Juggernaut--them

Bramah--ye Gods of China and Hindostan--ye too must fall, for this day the sons of Jehovah arise and lead their captivity captive. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He breaketh the bow, he cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariots in the fire. Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth." Church of God, come forth with songs, come forth with shouting to your last battle. Behold the battle of Armageddon draweth nigh. Blow ye the silver trumpets for the fight, ye soldiers of the cross. Come on, come on, ye leagured hosts of hell. Strong in the strength of God most High, we shall dash back your ranks as the rock breaketh the waves of the sea. We shall stand against you and triumph, and tread you down as ashes under the soles of our feet. "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam."

Would to God that the joy of heart which we feel this morning may tempt some soul to seek the like. It is to be found in Christ at the foot of his dear cross. Believe on him, sinners and thou art saved.

Chapter 52

The High Priest Standing Between the Dead and the Living

A Sermon

(No. 341)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 21st, 1860, by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed."--Numbers 16:47-48.

WE HAVE ATTENTIVELY read the passage which contains the account of this transaction. The authority of Moses and Aaron had been disputed by an ambitious man belonging to an elder branch of the family of Levi, who had craftily joined with himself certain factious spirits of the tribe of Reuben, who themselves also sought to attain to power by their supposed rights through Reuben the firstborn. By a singular judgment from heaven, God had proved that rebellion against Moses was a mortal sin. He had bidden the earth open its mouth and swallow up all the traitors, and both Levites and Reubenites had disappeared, covered in a living grave. One would have imagined that from this time the murmurings of the children of Israel would have ceased, or that at least even should they have daring enough to gather in little mutinous knob, yet their traitorous spirit never would have come to so great a height as to develops itself in the whole body openly before the Lord's tabernacle. Yet so was it. On the very morrow after that solemn transaction, the whole of the people of Israel gathered themselves

together, and with unholy clamours surrounded Moses and Aaron, charging them with having put to death the people of the Lord. Doubtless they hinged this accusation upon the fact, that whenever Moses prayed God heard him; then would they say, "Had he prayed upon this occasion the people would not have been destroyed; the earth would not have opened her mouth, and they would not have been swallowed up." They would thus attempt to prove the charge which they brought against these two great men of God. Can you picture the scene now in your mind's eye. There is the infuriated mass of people; the spectacle of such a crowd as I see before me in this hall is overpowering, and were all this multitude in tumult against two men, the two might have sufficient cause for trembling, but this would be but as a grain of sand compared with that inconceivable number who were then gathered. A large part of those three millions would come up in one vast tumultuous host; whatever was proposed by any leader of the mob would no doubt have instantly been carried into effect, and had it not been for the awful majesty which surrounded the person of Moses, no doubt they would have torn him to pieces on the spot. But just as they are rushing up like the waves of the sea, the cloudy pillar which hung above the tabernacle descends, and envelopes in its fold, as with a protecting baptism, the whole of the sacred place. Then in the center of this cloud there blazed out that marvellous light called the Shekinah, which was the indication of the presence of Him who cannot be seen, but whose glory may be manifest. The people stand back a little; Moses and Aaron fall upon their faces in prayer; they beg of God that he would spare the people, for they have heard a voice coming out of the excellent glory, saying, "Get thee up from this people, that I may destroy them in a moment." This time God's blow goes forth with his word, for the destroying angel begins to mow down the outer ranks of the vast tumultuous host, there

they fall one upon another; Moses with his undimmed vision, looking over the heads of the people, can see them begin to fall beneath the scythe of death. "Up," saith Aaron, up, and take with thee thy censer; snatch fire from off the holy altar, and run among the people, for the plague has begun." Aaron, a man of a hundred years of age, fills his censor, runs along as if he were a youth, and begins to swing it towards heaven with holy energy, feeling that in his hand was the life of the people; and when the incense is accepted in heaven, death stops in his work. On this side are heaps upon heaps of corpses slain by God's avenging angel, and there stand the crowd of living people, living only because of Aaron's intercession; living simply because he had waved that censor and burned that incense for them; otherwise, had the angel smitten them all, they would all have lain together as the leaves of the forest lie in autumn--dead and sear.

I think you can now in your imaginations picture the scene. I desire to use the picture before us as a great spiritual type of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for that erring multitude of the sons of men, who "like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one to his own way." We shall look at Aaron this morning in a five-fold character. The whole scene is typical of Christ; and Aaron, as he appears before us in each character is a most magnificent picture of the Lord Jesus.

I. First, let us look at Aaron as the LOVER of the people. You know who it is to whom we give that name of "Lover of my Soul." You will be able to see in Aaron the lover of Israel; in Jesus the lover of his people. Aaron deserves to be very highly praised for his patriotic affection for a people who were the most rebellious and stiffnecked that ever grieved the heart of a good man. You must remember that in this case he was the aggrieved party. The clamor was made against Moses and against Aaron, yet it was Moses and Aaron who intercede and saved the people.

They were the offended ones, yet were they the saving ones. Aaron had a special part in the matter, for no doubt the conflict of Korah especially was rather against the priesthood, which belonged exclusively to Aaron, than against the prophetical dispensation which God had granted to Moses. Aaron must have felt when he saw Korah there and the two hundred and fifty men, all of them with their censors, that the plot was against him; that they wished to strip from him his mitre, to take from him his embroidered vest, and the glittering stones that shone upon his breast; that they wished to reduce him to the position of a common Levite, and take to themselves his office and his dignity. Yet, forgetting himself, he doth not say, "Let them die; I will wait awhile till they have been sufficiently smitten." But the old man with generous love hastened into the midst of the people, though he was himself the aggrieved person. Is not this the very picture of our sweet Lord Jesus? Had not sin dishonored him? Was he not the Eternal God, and did not sin therefore conspire against him as well as against the Eternal Father and the Holy Spirit? Was he not, I say, the one against whom the nations of the earth stood up and said, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us." Yet he, our Jesus, laying aside all thought of avenging himself, becomes the Savior of his people.

"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste he fled;
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."

Oh! generous Christ, forgetting the offenses which we have committed against thee, and making atonement by thine own blood for sins which were perpetrated against thine own glory!

Well, you note again, that Aaron in thus coming forward as the

deliverer and lover of his people, must have remembered that he was abhorred by this very people. They were seeking his blood; they were desiring to put him and Moses to death, and yet all thoughtless of danger, he snatches up his censer and runs into their midst with a divine enthusiasm in his heart. He might have stood back, and said, "No, they will slay me if I go into their ranks; furious as they are, they will charge this new death upon me and lay me low." But he never considers it. Into the midst of their crowd he boldly springs. Most blessed Jesus, thou mightest not only think thus, but indeed thou didst feel it to be true. Thou didst come unto thine own, and thine own received thee not. Thou didst come into the world to save a race that hated thee, and oh, how they proved their hatred to thee, for they did spit upon thy cheeks; they did cast calumny and slander upon thy person; they did take the heir, and said, "Come, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours." Jesus, thou wast willing to die a martyr, that thou mightest be made a sacrifice for those by whom thy blood was spilt. Jesus transcends Aaron; Aaron might have feared death at the hands of the people, Jesus Christ did actually meet it, and yet there he stood even in the hour of death, waving his censer, staying the plague, and dividing the living from the dead.

Again, you will see the love and kindness of Aaron, if you look again; Aaron might have said, "But the Lord will surely destroy me also with the people, if I go where the shafts of death are flying they will reach me." He never thinks of it; he exposes his own person in the very forefront of the destroying one. There comes the angel of death, smiting all before him, and here stands Aaron in his very path, as much as to say, "Get thee back! get thee back! I will wave my incense in thy face; destroyer of men, thou canst not pass the censor of God's high priest." Oh thou glorious High Priest of our profession, thou mightest

not only have feared this which Aaron might have dreaded, but thou didst actually endure the plague of God, for when thou didst come among the people to save them from Jehovah's wrath, Jehovah's wrath fell upon thee. Thou wast forsaken of thy Father. The plague which Jesus kept from us slew him, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The sheep escaped, but, "his life and blood the Shepherd pays, a ransom for the flock."

Oh, thou lover of thy church, immortal honors be unto thee! Aaron deserves to be beloved by the tribes of Israel, because he stood in the gap and exposed himself for their sins; but thou, most mighty Savior, thou shalt have eternal songs, because, forgetful of thyself, thou didst bleed and die, that man might be saved!

I would again for one moment, draw your attention to that other thought which I have already hinted at, namely, that Aaron as a lover of the people of Israel deserves much commendation, from the fact that it is expressly said, he ran into the host. I am not just now sure about Aaron's age, but being older than Moses, who must have been at this time about ninety years of age, Aaron must have been more than a hundred, and probably, a hundred and twenty, or more. It is no little thing to say that such a man, clad no doubt in his priestly robes, ran, and that for a people who had never shown any activity to do him service, but much zeal in opposing his authority. That little fact of his running is highly significant, for it shows the greatness and swiftness of the divine impulse of love that was within. Ah! and was it not so with Christ? Did he not haste to be our Savior? Were not his delights with the sons of men? Did he not often say, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." His dying for us was not a thing which he dreaded. "With desire have I desired to eat this Passover." He had panted for the moment when he

should redeem his people. He had looked forward through eternity for that hour when he should glorify his Father, and his Father might glorify him. He came voluntarily bound by no constraint, except his own covenant engagements,; and he cheerfully and joyfully laid down his life--a life which no man could take from him, but which he laid down of himself. While I look with admiration upon Aaron, I must look with adoration upon Christ. While I write Aaron down as the lover of his race, I write down Jesus Christ as being the best of lovers--the friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

II. But I now pass on to take a second view of Aaron as he stands in another character. Let us now view Aaron as THE GREAT PROPITIATOR. Wrath had gone out from God against the people on account of their sin, and it is God's law that his wrath shall never stay unless a propitiation be offered. The incense which Aaron carried in his hand was the propitiation before God, from the fact that God saw in that perfume the type of that richer offering which our Great High Priest is this very day offering before the throne.

Aaron as the propitiator, is to be looked at first as bearing in his censer that which was necessary for the propitiation. He did not come empty-handed. Even though God's high priest, he must take the censor, he must fill it with the ordained incense, made with the ordained materials, and then he must light it with the sacred fire from off the altar, and with that alone. With the censer in his hand he is safe; without it Aaron might have died as well as the rest of the people. The qualification of Aaron partly lay in the fact that he had the censer, and that that censer was full of sweet odours which were acceptable to God. Behold, then, Christ Jesus as the propitiator for his people. He stands this day before God with his censor smoking up towards heaven. Behold the Great High Priest! See him this day with his pierced hands,

and head that once was crowned with thorns. Mark how the marvellous smoke of his merits goeth up for ever and ever before the eternal throne. 'Tis he, 'tie he alone who puts away the sins of his people. His incense, as we know, consists first of all of his positive obedience to the divine law. He kept his Father's commands; he did everything he should have done; he kept to the full the whole law of God, and made it honorable. Then mixed with this is his blood--an equally rich and precious ingredient. That bloody sweat--the blood from his head, pierced with the crown of thorns, the blood of his hands as they were nailed to the tree; the blood of his feet as they were fixed to the wood; and the blood of his very heart--richest of them all--all mixed together with his merits--these make up the incense--an incense incomparable--an incense peerless and surpassing all others. Not all the odours that ever rose from tabernacle or temple could for a moment stand in rivalry with these. The blood alone speaketh better things than that of Abel, and if Abel's blood prevailed to bring vengeance, how much more shall the blood of Christ prevail to bring down pardon and mercy! Our faith is fixed on perfect righteousness and complete atonement, which are as sweet frankincense before the Father's face. Besides that, it was not enough for Aaron to have the proper incense. Korah might have that too, and he might have the censor also. That would not suffice--he must be the ordained priest; for mark, two hundred and fifty men fell in doing the act which Aaron did. Aaron's act saved others; their act destroyed themselves. So Jesus, the propitiator, is to be looked upon as the ordained one--called of God as was Aaron. Settled in eternity as being the predestinated propitiation for sin, he came into the world as an ordained priest of God, receiving his ordination not from man, neither by man, but like Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God, without father, without mother, without

descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, he is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Stand back, sons of Korah, all of you who call yourselves priests. I can scarce imagine that any man in this world who takes to himself the title of a priest, except he take it in the sense in which all God's people are priests,--I cannot imagine that a priest can enter heaven. I would not say a thing too stern or too severe; but I do most thoroughly believe that an assumption of the office of priest is so base an usurpation of the priestly office of Christ, that I could as well conceive of a man being saved who called himself God, as conceive of a man being saved who called himself a priest; if he really means what he says, he has so trenched upon the priestly prerogative of Christ, that it seems to me he has touched the very crown jewels, and is guilty of a blasphemy, which, unless it be repented of, shall surely bring damnation on his head. Shake your garments, ye ministers of Christ, from all priestly assumption; come out from among them; touch not the unclean thing. There are no priests now specially to minister among men. Jesus Christ, and he only is the priest of his Church, and he hath made all of us priests and kings unto our God, and we shall reign for ever and ever. If I should have any person here so weak as to depend for his salvation upon the offerings of another man, I conjure him to forego his deception. I care not who your priests may be. He may belong to the Anglican or to the Romish church. Ay, and to any church under heaven. If he claimeth to be anything of a priest more than you can claim yourself--away with him--he imposes upon you; he speaks to you that which God abhors, and that which the Church of Christ should abhor and would detest, were she truly alive to her Master's glory. None but Jesus, none but Jesus; all other priests and offerings we disdain. Cast dirt upon their garments, they are not and they cannot be priests; they

usurp the special dignity of Jesus.

But let us note once more in considering Aaron as the great propitiator, that we must look upon him as being ready for his work. He was ready with his incense, and ran to the work at the moment the plague broke out. We do not find that he had need to go and put on his priestly garments; we do not find that he had to prepare for performing the propitiatory work; but he went there and then as soon as the plague broke out. The people were ready to perish and he was ready to save. Oh, my hearer, listen to this, Jesus Christ stands ready to save thee now; there is no need of preparation; he hath slain the victim; he hath offered the sacrifice; he hath filled the censor; he hath put to it the glowing coals. His breastplate is on his breast; his mitre is on his head; he is ready to save thee now. Trust him, and thou shalt not find need for delay. Rely upon him, and thou shalt not find that he hath to go a day's journey to save thee; "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Ye who know not Christ, hear this! Ye are lost and ruined by the fall. Wrath is gone out from God against you. That wrath must consume you to the lowest hell, unless some one can propitiate God on your behalf. You cannot do it. No man can do it; no prayers of yours; no sacraments, nay, though you could sweat a bloody sweat, it would not avail; but Christ is able to make propitiation. He can do it, and he alone; he can stand between you and God, and turn away Jehovah's wrath, and he can put into your heart a sense of his love. Oh, I pray you, trust him, trust him. You may not be ready for him, but he is always ready to save, and indeed I must correct myself in that last sentence, you are ready for him. If you be never so vile, and never so ruined by your sin, their needs no preparation and no readiness. It was not the merit of the people that saved them, nor any

preparation on their part; it was the preparedness of the high priest that saved them. He is prepared. He stands on the behalf of those who believe on him. Would that thou wouldst now believe on him and trust thy soul in his hands; and oh, believe me, thy sins which are many shall be all forgiven; the plague shall be stayed, nor shall God's wrath go out against thee, but thou shalt be saved.

III. Let me now view Aaron as THE INTERPOSER.

Let me explain what I mean. As the old Westminster Annotations say upon this passage, "The plague was moving among the people as the fire moveth along a field of corn." There it came; it began in the extremity; the faces of men grew pale, and swiftly on, on it came, and in vast heaps they fell till some fourteen thousand had been destroyed. Aaron wisely puts himself just in the pathway of the plague. It came on, cutting down all before it, and there stood Aaron the interposer with arms outstretched and censor swinging towards heaven, interposing himself between the darts of death and the people. "If there be darts that must fly," he seemed to say, "let them pierce me; or let the incense shield both me and the people. Death," saith he, "art thou coming on thy pale horse? I arrest thee, I throw back thy steed upon his haunches. Art thou coming, thou skeleton king? With my censor in my hand I stand before thee; thou must march over my body; thou must empty my censer; thou must destroy God's High Priest, ere thou canst destroy this people." Just so was it with Christ. Wrath had gone out against us. The law was about to smite us the whole human race must be destroyed. Christ stands in the forefront of the battle. "The stripes must fall on me," he cries; "the arrows shall find a target in my breast. On me, Jehovah, let thy vengeance fall." And he receives that vengeance, and afterwards upspringing from the grave he waves the censer full of the merit of his blood, and bids this wrath and fury

stand back. On which side are you to-day, sinner? Is God angry with thee, sinner? Are thy sins unforgiven? Say, art thou unpardoned? Art thou abiding still an heir of wrath and an inheritor of death? Ah! then would that thou wert on the other side of Christ. If thou dost believe on Christ, then let me ask thee, dost thou know that thou art completely saved? No wrath can ever reach thee, no spiritual death can ever destroy thee, no hell can ever consume thee, and why? What is thy guard, what thy protection? I see the tear, glistening in thine eye as thou sayest, "There is nothing between me and hell save Christ? There is nothing between me and Jehovah's wrath save Christ? There is nothing between me and instant destruction save Christ? But he is enough. He with the censor in his hand--God's great ordained Priest--he is enough." Ah, brothers and sisters, if you have put between you and God, baptisms and communions, fastings, prayers, tears and vows, Jehovah shall break through your refuges as the fire devours the stubble. But if, my soul, Christ stands between thee and Jehovah, Jehovah cannot smite thee; his thunderbolt must first pierce through the Divine Redeemer ere it can reach thee, and that can never be.

My dear hearers, do you perceive this great truth, that there is nothing which can save the soul of man, save Jesus Christ standing between that soul and the just judgment of God? And oh, I put again the personal enquiry to you, are you sheltered behind Christ? Sinner, are you standing to-day beneath the cross? Is that thy shelter? Is the purple robe of Jesus' atonement covered over you?

Are you like the dove which hides in the clefts of the rock? Have you hidden in the wounds of Christ? Say, have you crept into his side, and do you feel that he must be your shelter till the tempest be overpast? Oh, be of good cheer; he for whom Christ is the intercessor, is a rescued man. Oh, soul, if thou art not in Christ, what wilt thou do

when the destroying angel comes? Careless sinner, what will become of thee when death arrests thee? Where wilt thou be when the judgment trumpet rings in thine ears, and sounds an alarm that shall wake the dead? Sleepy sinner, sleeping to-day under God's Word, will you sleep then, when Jehovah's thunders are let loose, and all his lightnings set the heavens in a blaze? I know where then you shall seek a shelter! You shall seek it where you cannot find it, you shall bid the rocks fall upon you, and ask the mountains to hide you, but their stony bowels shall know of no compassion, their hearts of adamant shall yield you no pity, and you shall stand exposed to the blast of vengeance and the shower of the hot hail of God's fury, and nothing shall protect you, but as Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed from off the face of the earth, so must you be destroyed, and that for ever and ever, because ye believed not on Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

IV. But we cannot tarry longer here; we must again pass to another point. We have viewed Aaron in three characters--as the lover, the propitiator, and the intercessor; now, fourthly, let me view him as THE SAVIOR.

It was Aaron Aaron's censor, that saved the lives of that great multitude. If he had not prayed the plague had not stayed, and the Lord would have consumed the whole company in a moment. As it was, you perceive there were some fourteen thousand and seven hundred that died before the Lord. The plague had begun its dreadful work, and only Aaron could stay it. And now I want you to notice with regard to Aaron, that Aaron, and especially the Lord Jesus, must be looked upon as a gracious Savior. It was nothing but love that moved Aaron to wave his censor. The people could not demand it of him. Had they not brought a false accusation against him? And yet he saves them. It must have been love and nothing but love. Say, was there anything in the voices of that

infuriated multitude which could have moved Aaron to stay the plague from before them? Nothing! nothing in their character! nothing in their looks! nothing in their treatment of God's High Priest! and yet he graciously stands in the breach, and saves them from the devouring judgment of God! Oh! brothers and sisters--if Christ hath saved us he is a gracious Savior indeed. Often as we think of the fact that we are saved, the tear falls down our cheek; for we never can tell why Jesus hath saved us.

"What was there in you that could merit esteem!
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas 'Even so, Father!' you ever must sing
'Because it seem'd good in thy sight.'"

There is no difference between the glorified in heaven and the doomed in hell, except the difference that God made of his own sovereign grace. Whatever difference there may be between Saul the apostle and Elymas the sorcerer, has been made by infinite sovereignty and undeserved love. Paul might still have remained Saul of Tarsus, and might have become a damned fiend in the bottomless pit, had it not been for free sovereign grace which came out to snatch him as a brand from the burning. Oh, sinner, thou sayest "There is no reason in me why God should save me," but there is no reason in any man. Thou hast no good point, nor hath any man. There is nothing in any man to commend him to God. We are all such sinners, that hell is our deserved portion; and if any of us be saved from going down into the pit, it is God's undeserved sovereign bounty that doth it, and not any merits of ours. Jesus Christ is a most gracious Savior.

And then again, Aaron was an unaided Savior. Even Moses did not come with Aaron to help him. He stood alone in the gap with that censer--that one solitary stream of smoke dividing between the living

and the dead. Why did not the princes of Israel come with him? Alas! they could have done nothing, they must have died themselves. Why did not all the Levity come with him? They must have been smitten if they had dared to stand in the place of God's High Priest. He stands alone, alone, alone! and herein was he a great type of Christ, who could say, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." Do not think, then, that when Christ prevails with God, it is because of any of your prayers, or tears, or good works. He never puts your tears and prayers into his censor. They would mar the incense. There is nothing but his own prayers, and his own tears, and his own merits there. Do not think that you are saved because of anything that you have ever done or can ever do for Christ. We may preach, and we may be made in God's hand the spiritual fathers of thousands of souls, but our preaching doth in no way help to turn away the wrath of God from us. Christ doth it all, entirely and alone, and no man must dare to stand as his helper. Sinner, dost thou hear this, thou art saying, "I cannot do this or that." He asks thee not to do anything, thou sayest, "I have no merits." Man, he does not want any, if thou wouldst help Christ thou wilt be lost, but if thou wilt leave Christ to do it all, thou shalt be saved. Come now, the very plan of salvation is this, to take Christ to be thine all in all; he will never be a part-Savior; he never came to patch our ragged garments; he will give us a new robe, but he will never mend the old one. He did not come to help build the palace of God, he will quarry every stone and lay it on its fellow, he will have no sound of hammer, or help in that great work. Oh that this voice could ring through the world while I proclaim again those words, the deathblow of all Popery, legality, and carnal merit, "Jesus only, Jesus only." "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Nor doth he need a helper; "He came not to

call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

He was, then, you will perceive, a gracious Savior, and all unaided one; and, once more, Aaron as a Savior was all-sufficient. Death came up to the very feet of Aaron; there lay a dead man, there lay a mother, a child, a prince, a hewer of wood, a drawer of water,--there they lay. There stood a strong man in his agony, and implored that he might not die, but he fell backward a corpse. There stood up a prince of Israel and must he die? Yes, he must fall. All-devouring death, like a hungry lion, came howling onward, amidst the screams and shrieks of the people, but there he stood; that censer seemed to say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." What a miracle that the censer should stop the reign of death. Up to this mark the waves of that shoreless sea are flowing; there men stand on the terra firma of life. Aaron stands, and as God's High Priest with that censer alone, he puts back grim death; the whole host of Israel, if they had been armed and had carried bows, could not have driven back the pestilence; nay, all the hosts of armed men that ever stained the earth with blood could not have driven back God's plagues. Death would have laughed at them, yea, he would have trodden in among their ranks and cut them in pieces, but Aaron alone is enough, fully sufficient, and that through the burning of the incense. Oh sinner, Christ is an all-sufficient Savior, able to save; you cannot save yourself, but he can save you. Oh sinner, all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; it mattereth not how base and vile you may have been, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Though the remembrance of thy sin bring scarlet into thy face, dost thou blush to think what a wretch thou hast been, has thy life been foul adultery, has it been blasphemy, lying, hatred of God's people, and what not,--I add to this another, if thou wilt,--or lasciviousness,

debauchery, murder,--if all these crimes were there, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, would be able still to cleanse thee from all sin. Though thou had committed every crime in the catalogue of iniquity, sins which we cannot mention, yet "Though thy sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow." And thou sayest, "How can I partake of this?" Simply by trusting Christ with thy soul. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved he that believeth not shall be damned." This was Christ's commission to the apostles, he bid them go forth and preach this great truth, and again I proclaim it, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not must be damned." He that believeth not shall be damned, be his sins never so few, he that believeth shall never be lost, though his skis may have been never so many. Trust thou thy soul with Christ, and thy sins are at once forgiven, at once blotted out.

V. And now I come to my last point, and that is, Aaron as THE DIVIDER--the picture of Christ.

Aaron the anointed one stands here; on that side is death, on this side life; the boundary between life and death is that one man. Where his incense smokes the air is purified, where it smokes not the plague reigns with unmitigated fury. There are two sorts of people here this morning, we forget the distinction of rich and poor, we know it not here there are two sorts of people, we forego the distinction of the learned and unlearned we care not for that here; there are two sorts here, and these are the living and the dead, the pardoned, the unpardoned, the saved, and the lost. What divides the true Christian from the unbeliever? Some think it is that the Christian takes the Sacrament, the other not. It is no division, there be men who have gone to hell with sacramental bread in their mouths; others may imagine that

Baptism makes the difference, and indeed it is the outward token, the baptismal pool is the means by which we show to the world that we are buried in Christ's grave, in type that we are dead to the world and buried in Christ; we rise up from it in testimony that we desire to live in newness of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He who is baptized does in that way cross the Rubicon, he draws the sword and throws away the scabbard, he is the baptized one, and has a sign that can never be eradicated from him. He is dedicated through that baptism to Christ, but it is but an outward sign, for many have there been who have been baptized with water, who not having the baptism of the Holy Ghost, have afterwards been baptized in the fiery sufferings of eternal torment. No! no! the one division, the one great division between those who are God's people and those who are not, is Christ. A man in Christ is a Christian; a man out of Christ is dead in trespasses and sins. "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ is saved, he that believeth not is lost." Christ is the only divider between his people and the world. On which side, then, art thou to-day, my hearer? Come, let the question go individually to you. Young man, on which side are you? Are you Christ's friend and servant, or are you his enemy? Old man, thou with the grey head yonder, thou hast but a little while to live, on which side art thou? Art thou my Master's blood-bought one, or art thou still a lost sheep? And thou matron, thou who art busied, perhaps, even now in thy thoughts upon thy children, think not of them for a moment, on which side art thou? Hast thou believed, hast thou been born again, or art thou still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity? Ye that stand yonder, let the question penetrate your thick rank now, where are you? Can you take the name of Christ upon your lips, and say, "Jesus, I am thine, and thou art mine, thy blood and righteousness are my hope and trust;" for if

not, my hearer, thou art among the spiritually dead, and thou shalt soon be among the damned unless divine grace prevent, and change, and renew thee.

Please remember, brothers and sisters, that as Christ is the great divider now, so will he be in the day of judgment. Do you never think of that, he shall divide them the one from the other, as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. It is the Shepherd's person that divideth the sheep from the goats. He stands between them, and in that last day of days for which all other days were made, Christ shall be the great divider. There the righteous clad in white, in songs triumphant glorified with him; and there the lost, the unbelieving, the fearful, the abominable. What divides them from you bright host? Nothing but the person of the Son of Man, on whom they look, and weep, and mourn, and wail because of him. That is the impenetrable barrier that shall shut out the damned from eternal bliss. The gate which may let you in now will be the fiery gate which shall shut you out hereafter. Christ is the door of heaven; oh, dreadful day when that door shall be shut, when that door shall stand before you, and prevent you entering into the felicity which you shall then long for, when you cannot enter into it.

Oh! on which side shall I be, when all these transitory things are done away with, when the dead have risen from their graves, when the great congregation shall stand upon the land, and upon the sea, when every valley, and every mountain, and every river, and every sea, shall be crowded with multitudes standing in thick array? Oh! when he shall say, "Separate my people, thrust in the sickle, for the harvest of the world is ripe;" my soul, where shalt thou be? Shalt thou be found among the lost? Shall the dread trumpet send thee down to hell, while a voice that rends thine ear, shall call after thee "Depart from me, depart

from me, ye workers of iniquity into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh, grant that I may not be there, but among thy people may I stand. So may it be; may we be on the right hand of the Judge to all eternity, and remember that for ever and ever Christ will be the divider, he shall stand between the lost and the saved, he shall interpose for ever between the damned and the glorified. Again I put it to you, give me your ears just for one moment while I speak. What say you, sirs, shall this congregation be rent in twain? The hour is coming when our wills and wishes shall have no forge. God will divide the righteous from the wicked then, and Christ shall be the dread division, I say, are we prepared to be separated eternally? Husband, are you prepared to renounce to-day your wife for ever, are you prepared when the clammy sweat gathers on her brow to give her the last kiss, and say, "Adieu, adieu, I shall never meet with thee again." Child, son, daughter, are you ready to go home and sit down at the table of your mother, and ere you eat, say, "Mother, I now forswear you once for all, I am determined to be lost and as thou art on the side of Christ, and I will never love him, I will part with you for ever." Surely the ties of kinship make us long to meet in another world, and do we wish to meet in hell? Do you wish all of you to meet there--a grim company to lie in the midst of the flames. Will you abide in the devouring fire, and dwell in everlasting burning? No, your wishes are that you may meet in heaven, but you cannot unless you meet in Christ, you cannot meet in Paradise unless you meet in him. Oh that now the grace of God were poured upon you, that you might come unto Jesus.

Chapter 53

Grace Reviving Israel

A Sermon

(No. 342)

Delivered at Tottenham Court Road Chapel, by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon.

"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."--Hosea 14:5-7.

N READING THIS PASSAGE, does it ever fail to charm you? How full of beauty, and how full of poetry it is! Every word is a figure. Fair flowers that adorn, and corn that enricheth the fields; the olive tree, and the vine; the scent of the wine of Lebanon, and all rich things are here gathered and clustered together, to set forth the beauty of Israel under the reviving influences of God's favor. And as this one portion of Sacred Writ is full of poetry, the like holds good of all the Word Of God. There is no book so poetic in its character as the Book of Inspiration. We had rather for poetry's sake, lose all the books that have ever been written by all the poets that ever lived, than lose the sacred Scriptures; yea, if a collection could be made of all the gems of all the noted books; could they all be bound into one volume, there could not be found so many beauties as lie here, some of them hidden, and others of them manifest, in this most blessed volume of Revelation. Altogether apart from the sublimity of the matters treated, and the glory of the doctrines, the style itself is enough to make the book

precious to every reader. It is a wondrous book; it is the book of God: yea, as Herbert says, "The god of books." It is a book full of stars; every page blazes with light, from almost every sentence there beams forth some beautiful metaphor, some glorious figure.

In expounding the words of the text, we shall observe, first, the promise of grace made to Israel, notwithstanding, Israel's sin: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Secondly, the influences of divine grace sweetly set forth in divers metaphors; and thirdly, the effect of divine grace upon those around: "they that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

I. Here is A PROMISE OF GRACE MADE TO THE CHRISTIAN: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." I need not remind you that the Christian, (under the similitude of Israel, as I shall presently show you,) is here compared to a plant, a plant which cannot be watered by any water that is to be found on earth, a plant which needs heavenly watering, even the dew from above. Hypocrites may be watered by natural religion. Formalists may get their supply from the wells and springs of earth; but the Christian is a plant which can only be supported by dew from heaven. He feels that though the river of Egypt might be turned to his roots, he could not grow; though all the water in its floods, and though the ocean itself might be brought to irrigate him, yet he could get no genial moisture, no true growing power, from all that could be had on earth. He needs to have his dew from heaven. "Well," says God to Israel, "thou art of thyself dewless, and sapless, and motionless, and thou hast no moisture. Thou canst not obtain any of thine own, nor can mortals give it thee; but do thou stand still where I have planted thee, and I will water thee every moment. I, the Lord will keep thee, I will be as the dew unto thee." That Eastern figure, dew--for it is

essentially Eastern, and not so well to be understood in this country--has in it several beauties.

You will notice, first of all, that grace, like the dew, often comes down imperceptibly into man's heart. When did the dew tell us that it was about to fall? Who ever heard the footsteps of the dew coming down upon the meadow grass? Who ever knew when it was descending? We see it when it has fallen; but who saw it come? And so with Christianity: it is very often imperceptible in its operations. True it is sometimes like the rattling hail, pelting on the windows: the sinner knows when it comes by stormy convictions, and by troubled feelings within, but quite as often the work of grace in man's heart is like the "still small voice," which few hear, and of which even the man himself is partially unconscious, not as to its operation perhaps, but as to its nature, feeling that there is a something in his heart, though not positively sure that it really comes from God. Christian! despise not spiritual things, because thou hearest not a sound therewith. Much that God doeth, he doeth in silence. There is a plant which bursts with the sound of a trumpet; but full many a flower called beautiful, openeth in silence, and no man heareth the sound thereof. There be some Christians who seem bound to make a noise in the world, they were made for that purpose; but there be far more who have to blush unseen whose glory it is not to "waste their sweetness," though to perfume "the desert air," and to make it sing and blossom like the garden of the Lord. Beloved, you may perhaps fancy that you have not grace, because it has not come upon you in terrible excitements and in awful convictions. I beseech you, do not distrust the power of grace, because it has stolen imperceptibly into your hearts. Mark the promise: "I will be as the dew unto Israel,"

Again, if the dew is sometimes imperceptible, it is always sufficient.

If God waters the earth with dew, foolish would be the man who should go afterwards, to water after his Maker. And God's grace, when it comes upon man's heart, is all-sufficient. What he giveth unto Israel, his own chosen people, is always enough for them. They sometimes think they want something more; they never really do, and what else they want, or think they want, it is better for them still to want. God is sufficient.

And the dew, too, when it is required, is constant. God may, if he pleases, withhold the dew, that he may make a nation fear before him, but he usually sendeth the dew in its appointed time, and each morning beholdeth the pearly drops shed forth from the hand of God; and do, Christian, God will be thy dew. As thou wantest grace; so shalt thou find it.

"All needful grace will God bestow,
And crown that grace with glory too;
He gives us all things. and withholds
No real good from upright souls."

But it is superfluous for me to tell you what is the meaning of this figure. You all know it ten times better than I do, or at least you ought, for I am sure this text has been preached from times enough, and you are always hearing the metaphor used. Like many of God's metaphors it is so simple, so glorious, it arrests our attention at first sight--"I will be as the dew unto Israel." Instead of explaining, therefore, allow me to question you concerning it. Are you, my dear friends, of the number here mentioned who belong to Israel? You ask me what is meant by Israel. I reply, that historically Israel means God's elect, his chosen ones: "Israel have I loved, but Esau have I hated." But as you cannot tell that you are God's elect, except by signs and marks, I must tell you another meaning of Israel. Israel means a man of

prayer. The name of "Israel" was given to Jacob, because he "wrestled with the angel, and prevailed." Are you a man of prayer? Come now, answer the question, each one of you for yourselves. Are you men of prayer, and women of prayer? Alas! some of you may use a form of prayer, but it hath no life in it. You ask, do I object to forms of prayer? I answer, no. I believe that sometimes forms of prayer, moulded according to the mind of the Spirit, are offered up with the vital breath of the same Spirit of God. Far be it from me to say, that because you use a form of prayer, therefore you do not pray at all; this however I remind you, your form of prayer is merely a vehicle, that moveth not except as it is drawn. Of itself it is like a steam engine, motionless till the furnace is heated; or rather, it is like the carriage which is drawn by the steam engine, being linked thereto with chains. A form of prayer is a heavy material thing, which prayer has to drag after it. It is no help to prayer, but rather a burden to it. There may be prayer with the huge cumbrous thing called the form attached but the form is distinct in every sense from the power. The prayer is the spirit, the life, the desire, the wish, the agonizing panting with God to obtain the blessing I ask you not whether you use a form of prayer, or whether you utter extempore prayers; for you may speak extemporaneously in prayer, and talk as much nonsense, ay, and a great deal more than you would if you used a prescribed form; you may avoid formality, and become frivolous. It is not uttering spontaneous words that is prayer any more than repeating a litany. But I ask you, do you pray? If you are prayerless, then you have no right to call yourselves God's elect. God's people are a praying people. They are an Israel, a wrestling race; and unto them the promise is made--"I will be unto them as the dew unto Israel."

Yet one more hint: Israel may represent those who have chosen a better

portion, who have given up the mess of pottage, who have sold that to "the men whose portion is in this life," and are looking to the recompense in another world. Art thou, my hearer, one of those who are content with a mess of pottage? Is it enough for thee if thy dish be filled with dainty meat, thy wine-cup full, thine income steady, and thy back clothed with goodly raiment; and dost thou then care nothing for the things to come? Is thy whole soul set on the things of earth? Then I warn thee. Though thou mayest talk about being elect, thou art none of God's elect unless thou hast set thine affections on things above and not on things on the earth. If thou art trying to make the best of things in this world, rejecting or even slighting that one object which ought to be three only one, to make the best of the next world, and dost not leave this in God's hand for him to take care of, thou art none of his. Unless thou hast renounced the pottage, and taken Christ to be thine all and heaven thy portion, thou hast no well-founded hope, and thou hast no right to take this promise to thyself--"I will be as the dew unto Israel." But thou who abhorrest the world, thou who spendest thy time in prayer, thou mayest take this to thyself; and in thy most barren and dry moments, thou mayest urge this at the mercy-throne--"I will be as the dew unto Israel."

II. THE INFLUENCE OF DIVINE GRACE IN THE SOUL ARE HERE SET FORTH IN METAPHOR--"I will be as the dew unto Israel." What is the effect? Although grace is imperceptible in its coming, it is discernible enough in its fruits.

The very first effect of grace in the heart is, that it makes us grow upward. We shall "grow as the lily." This refers to the daffodil lily, which on a sudden, in a night, will spring up. There may have been no lilies at all in a field, but after a shower of rain the lilies may be seen springing up everywhere and the ground will appear perfectly

covered with their yellow hue. Mark, that is what grace does in a man's soul. Wherever grace comes, its first operation is to make us grow up. It is a remarkable fact, that young Christians grow upward faster than any other Christians. They grow upward in their flaming love, mighty zeal, ardent hopes and longing expectations. Sometimes indeed our old friends step in and say, "Ah! young man, you are growing a great deal too fast; you are springing too rapidly upward; you will have a bitter frost to nip you a little presently." Very well, that is true enough; but that frost will come quite soon enough, without any of your frosty breath going before it. Let the young grow when they can do not give them a piercing nip with your freezy fingers. Let them thrive while they can. You may tell us we shall hurt our constitutions, and by-and-bye we shall not be so zealous; nevertheless, let us alone till our constitutions are hurt, suffer us to be zealous while we can. You know very well, with all your prudence, you would give a king's ransom if you could to-morrow have your juvenile ardor over again; and yet you quarrel with us because we grow upward. Why it is the effect of grace to grow upwards. The very first thing that grace does for us is to make us grow upward in love. Oh! what sweet love that is that we have in the early morning of life! There is not a prayer-meeting, but we are there; there is not a lecture, but oh how sweet it is to us; there is scarce a good deed to be done, but we must be engaged in it; we are so earnest, we are growing so fast. "They shall grow as the lily;" that is the promise. So when you see the promise fulfilled, my dear aged friends, do not be peevish or rebuke the young people, because they grow up and flourish in the courts of the Lord's house.

There is a second effect. After they have been growing upward, they have to grow downward. While "he shall grow as the lily," he shall "cast forth his roots as Lebanon" likewise. God will not have his

people all flower and foliage, he wants them also to take deep root and throw out strong fibres. After a few years, when we have been growing up in ardent piety, it usually happens that some doubt crosses the mind, or some affliction comes, which, if it does not chill our ardor, yet sometimes checks our energy, and we do not grow so fast as we should. Well, what is the effect? Are we really hurt or injured thereby? I trow not. Growing down is quite as good as growing up. I will not say it is better. The most blessed growth in grace is to be growing up and growing down--to be rooted in humility, And yet growing up in zeal; but usually the two do not come together. Sometimes we grow up, and at other times we grow down. We are such poor mortals, we cannot attend to two things at once. So sure as ever we take to shooting up, the devil comes and tries to prevent us growing down; and if we are growing down, he generally keeps us from growing up. Well, if we cannot do two things at once, what a mercy it is that we can do one at a time, by God's grace! After having grown up. the Christian grows down; "he casts forth his roots as Lebanon;" that is, he gets less in his own esteem. He was nothing once, but he now begins to be less than nothing. He thought humbly of himself before; but now he thinks worse of himself than ever he did. If you ask him now what is his character, although he said he was "a poor sinner and nothing at all" before; now he will tell you, that he thinks he is the poorest of sinners, for he has not grown one atom the richer all the time he has served his Lord. He is still poor in spirit, and perhaps poorer than ever he was.

Blessed is it to grow downward!

And let me remind you, my dear friends, that growing downward is a very excellent thing to promote stability. Perhaps that is the exact meaning of the passage. When we are first brought to God, we are like the lily, wafted about by the wind, afterwards we grow downwards, and become

firm. I am fully convinced that the prevailing lack of this age is not so much in respect to growing upwards as growing downwards. Whenever I look abroad on the aggregate assemblies of religious people, I am obliged to hold a large number of my hearers in supreme contempt. Are you not one day crowding to hear me preach what I think the truth, and another day cramming a place where a man is preaching the very opposite to what I hold to be true? The fact is, some of you have no idea of what fundamental truth in theology is. The popular cry is for liberality of sentiment, and if a man happens to say a hard word against anything he thinks essentially wrong, he is accounted a bigot directly. Many of you shrink from the imputation of bigotry, as if it were more awful than heresy in regard to the faith. You would as soon be called a common informer as be called a bigot. I beseech you, do not be appalled at a taunt. Do not be a bigot, but do not be ashamed of being called one. A man ought to have stable principles, and not be ever shifting about from one set of opinions to another. He ought not to be hearing a Calvinistic minister in the Morning, and saying, that is good, and then going in the evening to hear an Arminian minister, and saying, that is good. We are often told by some ministers in their drawing rooms, that God will not ask in the day of judgment what a man believed, for if his life has been correct, it will not much matter what doctrines he held. I am at a loss for the authority on which they base such laxness. I wonder who told them that was the truth. I have read my Bible through, and I have never found a text that could absolve my judgment from its allegiance to my Maker. I hold, that to believe wrongly is equally as great a sin in the sight of heaven as to act wrongly. Error is a crime before God, and though there is liberty of conscience, so far as man and man are concerned, there is no liberty of conscience with God. You are not free to believe truth, or to believe

error just as you like. You are bound to believe what God says is truth, and on your soul's peril be it, that you believe two things that are contrary, or confound the positive and the negative, where faith is the evidence of justification, and unbelief the seal of a sinner's doom. Methinks God will say to you at last, "Man, I gave thee brains; I endowed thee with reason; how couldst thou suppose thyself less responsible for the use of thy brains than for the use of thy tongue?" One man says, "Yes;" another says "No," and because it is the fashion to call out "Liberality, liberality, liberality," thou dost assent to both, and joining the crowd thou art sincere in neither. Thou oughtest rather to say, "I believe that what I hold is true, and if I did not, I should not avow it, and believing it to be true, I cannot hold that the opposite is true, nor can I be continually going to hear one doctrine at one time and another at another; my conscience demands that I distinguish between things that differ."

My dear friends, do try to grow down; strive to get a good hold of the rocky doctrines of free grace; do not give them up; keep fast hold of them. When you believe a thing upon genuine conviction, do not shrink from the avowal, because an ill name is applied to it; say rather,

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."

Well, what next? After Christian has become confirmed in his doctrine, and has received the truth in the love of it, what next? Why the next thing is, he makes a profession. "His branches shall spread." He has been a lily straight up, with no branches at all; but now his roots have struck deep into the ground, like the cedars of Lebanon; and the next thing he does is to send forth branches. He says, "I am a

Christian; I cannot keep it a secret, I must let somebody know I am a child of God." He goes to a prayer-meeting, and he is asked to pray. There is one branch spread. He goes to join a church; there is another branch. He sits down to the Lord's supper: there is another branch. And so the little lily, which was at first but a tiny plant, now grows into a tree, and his branches spread. That is a blessed effect of grace, believe me, when it leads you to come forth from your obscurity, and let the world know what you are. I have no patience with some of you who talk about being secret Christians. I should think a man a deserter if he were to say, "Well, I am a soldier, but I do not like anybody to know it." I should think that he did not belong to one of our good regiments surely, or he would not be ashamed of his colors. But there are many now-a-days that you scarce know whether they are Christians. Shall I tell you why? The awful fact is, that they are not Christians. "No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel." You know what the consequence would be if he did,--it would burn a hole through so sure as it was a candle; and no man can have grace in his heart, and keep it a secret. I am sure it must come out; it is one of the things that cannot be concealed. You shall not tell me you can walk into worldly company, and never let it be known that you are a Christian; that you can live for months in a house, and keep it dark that a Christian is living there. If that is the case, I tell you the angels do not know it; for it is not a fact. He that is a child of God will be discovered; his conduct will be different from the rest of men. "Thy speech betrayeth thee," said the maid to Peter. And our speech will betray us, if we are disciples. I beseech you, let me stir you up, my young friends, to make a more open profession of your faith. The Savior has done much for you; do not be ashamed of him, I implore you, but begin to make a profession of Christ Jesus, your Lord.

Having joined the church and made a profession, what is the next effect of grace for the believer then? Why it is to make him beautiful as "the olive-tree." The most beautiful thing in the world is a Christian.

Shall I tell you what kind of beauty he has? His beauty is the beauty of an olive tree; and that consists, first, in its fruitfulness. The most beautiful olive tree a man can grow is the one that bears the most; and the most beautiful Christian in the Church is the one that abounds most in good works. Besides, the olive is an evergreen, and so is the Christian. He has an olive-green beauty. 'He has a beauty which does not fade away, as it does from other trees, but lives for ever.

Ah! my friends, we sometimes put one of our members before others because of his wealth, and at times we show a little partiality to another because of his eloquence, and to another because of his talents, but I take it that God ranks us all according to our fruitfulness. The most beautiful tree in a garden is the one that bears the most fruit: and there is a promise given to a Christian that after his branches have spread, his beauty shall be as the olive tree; that is, he shall grow and be laden with fruit.

The olive tree, I have told you before, is evergreen; and so is the beauty of the Christian. Alas for the beautiful Christians we have in some of our places of worship on Sunday! Glorious Christians! Oh! if they could be packed up and sent to heaven just as they are, or provided their appearances were true indications of their state, what a blessed thing it would be! But alas, alas! on the Monday they have not the same sort of dress they had on Sunday, and therefore they have not the same kind of actions. Oh! dear friends, there is so much more Sunday religion in these days! Now, I like a Monday religion, and a Tuesday religion, and a Wednesday religion, and a Thursday religion, and a Friday religion, and a Saturday religion. I do not think the

religion of the pulpit, or the religion of the pen, is to be relied upon. I think it is the religion of a draper's shop, the religion of a corn exchange, religion in a house, religion in the street, and the religion of a fireside, that proves us to be God's children. But how would some of you come off if you were weighed in these balances? Fine fellows, with your feathers on, on Sunday; but poor creatures when you are in your undress, in your religious dishabille on Monday! Ye are not well arrayed then; but ah! if ye were Christians, ye would be always well arrayed: yea, you would be always beautiful as the olive tree.

Again, "His smell shall be as Lebanon." Now, I take it, the smell means the report which will go out concerning a man. As you walk up Lebanon, it is said that the flowers of the aromatic herbs there cast up a most delicious perfume. You need not touch a flower--you can smell it at a distance. And so with the true Christian. Without seeking for it, he will obtain a blessed name among his brethren, and some name also amongst the world. "His beauty shall be as the olive tree."

Once more, "His smell shall be as Lebanon." Did you ever know a flower at all concerned about its odour, or about what people would think of it? Did you ever hear a rose have a law-suit with a thorn, because the thorn said the rose did not smell sweetly? No certainly not. The rose went silently on, casting up its perfume, and left Mr. Thorn alone.

Now, at times, with all ministers and with all Christians, there will be all manner of reports and hard sayings; but I have found a great gain by letting the fellows alone. When they are tired, they will have done, I dare say; and I am sure they will not much hurt us. If there be anything amiss in us, we are much obliged to them, and we will try and mend it; but if they have lied about us it is a satisfaction to us, as far as we are concerned, to know that they are liars, and we pray God that they may not have a portion in "the lake which burneth with fire

and brimstone." Beloved, you never need be very much concerned what men shall say of your character; only take care that in the midst of reproach you are without guile or guilt. Live, live, live,--that is the way to beat all slanderers and all calumniators. Keep straight on with what you think is right, and in due time your light shall burst forth as the morning, and your brightness as the sun in his strength. "His beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Wherever the Christian goes he will cast a perfume about him; and when he is gone he will leave some savor behind which will be remembered.

III. Thus far we have spoken concerning the benefits of grace to the Christian himself: more briefly I will now address you CONCERNING THE BENEFITS OF GRACE TO OTHERS.

The text says, "they that dwell under his shadow shall return." I am sure, my dear friends, if you have Christian principle in your heart, you will not like a selfish religion. Though you will hold it to be a duty continually to examine yourself; and to see that you also are sound in the faith, you will not confine your religion to yourself. You may perhaps take the maxim that Christianity should begin at home, but you will never think of improving on it by thinking that it ought to end there. I like an expansive religion. I should not like to attend a chapel where all the preaching was meant for me--where all I heard comforted me. I should not like to go where there was not a scrap for me, but all for my brethren; nor where there was not something for the poor sinner. I could not afford to attend a place where I should always hear that which was exclusively for the saint, or exclusively for the sinner. If a man left half his congregation without a word, I should doubt whether he would give me the right one. But there are some people so selfish that, provided they go to heaven, it is enough--they are in the covenant. They are the dear people of God--generally dear at any

price; a peculiar people--awfully peculiar they are, certainly: they are so different from other people,--there is no doubt about that. They say it is equal whether God ordains man's life or man's death. They would sit still to hear men damned, and I do believe they would sing a song over hell itself and hail its jubilee. They seem to have no feeling for anyone but themselves. They have dried the heart out of them by some cunning sleight of hand, they have taken away the marrow from the bones of godliness, and wrapped themselves entirely up in self. But true Christianity will be expansive and care for others.

Come, then, ye men of generous hearts, ye of glowing charity, here is a promise for you--you have some who dwell under your shadow. Are you a ministers your people sit under your shadow on the Sabbath. Are you a father? your children come and dwell under your shadow. Are you a master? your workmen dwell under your shadow; you have often prayed for their salvation; you have often yearned for the conversion of their souls. Mother! you have often pleaded for the deliverance of a daughter from her sin. "They that dwell under his shadow shall return." If you want to do good to your neighbors, and to bring them to Christ, put your own heart much upon the Savior. The more of Christ a man has, the more useful will he be in his day. If you were to look at all the ministers that have been useful, you will not find they were distinguished by great talent so much as by great grace. God can bless a poor unsophisticated countryman to the salvation of hundreds if he has grace; and a man ever so learned may preach in vain, with great periods and stupendous sentences, if he has none. Do you, then, seek to prove that promise--"I will be as the dew unto Israel," and so doing, you will get this other promise fulfilled--"They that dwell under your shadow shall return, shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

I have no time to dwell upon these points--"they shall revive as the corn," or "they shall return;" but I must just make a remark upon that sweet thought--"they shall grow as the vine." We will transplant the Eastern metaphor into Western soil. Vines, with us, grow up by the side of walls, they could not grow up themselves if there were not some prop against which they could lean for support. Now, I have often thought this is an explanation of that text--"Train up a child in the way he should go." Do you try all you can by God's grace to train up your child like you would a vine; and here is the promise. "It shall grow as the vine." Oh! I have thought, what a pretty sight it is to see an aged Christian, who, in his youth, was a Sabbath-school teacher, still a member of the Church; and there are nine or ten young men in the Church, perhaps, and they walk up and down the chapel, and go and talk to him, and comfort him. Do you not see how that is? Why, when the young man was a strong oak, he let those pieces of ivy grow around him; and those young Christians entwined and grew around him like the vine, and now he has become an old man the wind would come and blow the oak down, but the ivy that is twisted around it shields him from the blast and keeps him upright. So with aged Christians, when they have served their God well in their day and generation they shall have comforts from others who have grown around them like the vine, and shall be sheltered by them in their old age. May those of us who are young always seek to cheer the aged! Let us never despise them; let us try as much as we can to grow around them, that we may tower upwards by their means and that they may be comforted by our adherence. "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."

Lastly, "The scent thereof shall be as Lebanon." The Christian man shall not allow others to grow up by him, but by a godly conversation, he shall spread the sweetness of perfume wherever he goes. I know some

dear saints of the Lord who, if they come to my house for five minutes, leave a refreshing savor behind them for five weeks. They come and talk to me of the things of the kingdom, and I have not forgotten their sweet influence on my spirit for a long time after they have gone. It is said of the wine of Lebanon, that if you pour some into a glass the flavour of it will remain for a long time after the wine is gone. And you know of old wine casks, that it is long before the taste of the wine departs out of them. So with the old Christian; he has got a savoury conversation, he talks of the things of the kingdom, and leaves a perfume behind him which lasts for weeks afterwards and you say, "Oh how I wish that man of God would come to my house again; what a sweet savor there was about him!" This is not the case with every one. Many of you, when you go and see your friends, sit and tittle tattle all the afternoon, and on the Lord's day you break the Sabbath as much as if you had sought diversion in the park, although you cry out so much against those who go there. How many there are who utterly waste their time by unprofitable chat in their own houses! Let me solemnly warn you concerning this--"They that feared the Lord spake often one to another"--not about one another. When you meet together, there is too little talk about Christ Jesus, the glory of his kingdom, and the greatness of his power. Ministers come in for their share of fulsome praise or offensive scandal, but brethren, these things ought not to be so.

Beloved, if you are true Christians--that is the point--you will leave a scent behind you in your conversation; and when you are dead, there will still be a sweet savor left. Ah! there was good old wine in this pulpit once; there was good old wine in this house of God once, and I can see the stains of it here now. Yea, there is the perfume of holy Whitfield in this place to-night; I am sure there is. I can fancy his

shade looking down this evening upon this hallowed spot. I am sure he rejoices to see the multitude keeping holyday here; and there is to me, somehow, a kind of solemn awe throughout this place. I wonder how I dared to come here, to stand where he once stood, "whose shoes latchet I am unworthy to unloose." Oh! dear friends, it is something to leave a scent behind you as long as he has done. You may all do it in a measure. In one of Whitfield's sermons, (I like to read them continually, for I can find none like them), he speaks of some young man who said, "I will not live in my old father's house, for there is not a chair or a table there but smells of his piety." That is what you should endeavor to do, to make your house so smell of piety, that a wicked man cannot stop in it; to make it so holy, that without obtrusively telling your sentiments, it should make ungodly men uncomfortable in it; you should so live, that your name in your private circles, if not elsewhere, may be mentioned with honor, and it may be said of you, "Ah! he was one who reflected his Master's image, and who sought to adorn the doctrine of God his Savior in all things."

I may have spoken to you in what you may think an odd style to-night, but I have spoken earnestly, right on I never pretend to preach to you eloquently, but I have only thrown out thought; I wish you to remember, and God grant that you may find them to your profit.

But I am well aware that I am preaching to a great many who know nothing about the things of which I have been speaking. What shall I say to them? Oh! my dear hearers, I should like to strike beneath the floor of this pulpit, and get Whitfield to rise up and preach to you for five minutes. How he would plead with you! how he would stretch forth his hands, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and how he would cry out in his usual impassioned manner "Come, sinners, come; God help you to come to Jesus Christ!" and then he would go on to tell you how

the heart of Christ is big enough to take big sinners in, and how the blackest and the filthiest--the devil's castaways even, are welcome to Christ. And I think I see him pressing the poor convinced sinners into the fold. I think I see him doing as the angels did with Lot, taking them by the shoulders, and saying, "Run, run, for your life; look not behind you, stay not in all the plain!" I cannot do it as he could; but, nevertheless, if these lips had the language which the heart would speak, I would plead with you for Jesus' sake, that you would be reconciled to God. I have, I trust, some here who are crying for a Savior; they feel they want him; God has brought them to this states they feel their need of him. Sinner! if thou wantest Christ, Christ wants thee; if thou hast a desire after Christ, Christ has a desire after thee. What sayest thou, poor soul, wilt thou take Christ just as he is? Come! bundle out all thy righteousness. come! pack up all thy goodness and cast it out of doors. Take Jesus, Jesus only, to be thy salvation; and I tell thee, though thou wert black as night, and filthy as a demon, while thou art yet in the land of the living, if thou dost now take Christ as thy Savior, that Christ will be enough for thee, enough to clothe thee, enough to purge thee, enough to perfect thee, and enough to land thee safe in heaven. But if you are self-righteous, I have no gospel for you except this,

"Not the righteous, not the righteous,
Sinners, Jesus, came to save."

Sinners, of all sorts and sizes! sinners black, sinners blacker, sinners blackest! sinners filthy, sinners filthier, sinners filthiest! sinners bad, sinners worse, sinners worst! all ye who can take to yourselves the name of sinners! all of you who can subscribe to that title! I, in God's name, preach to you that "he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him;" and if by faith and prayer

you are enabled to come to him this night, there is not a sinner who feels his need of a Savior who may not this night have that Savior. God has given him first, and he will not deny him second. He who is freely proclaimed in revelation, is freely commended to you in ministration.

"True relief and true repentance,
Every grace that brings you nigh;
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."

Oh! save souls! O God! save souls! Amen! Amen!

Chapter 54

A Basket of Summer Fruit

A Sermon

(No. 343)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, October 28th, 1860, by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, a basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, the end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more."--Amos 8:1-2.

N READING THROUGH THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS, you must have been struck at their singular variety. On looking a little more closely, you have at once perceived that every prophet has a manner and style peculiarly his own. Although God speaketh through them all, yet they lose not their individuality or originality of character. The breath which causes the music is the same, but no two of the instruments give forth precisely the same sound. It is true they all utter the words of God; but each voice has its own special cry, so that though God is pre-eminently seen, yet the man is not lost. You do not find in searching through the prophets that Jeremiah copies the language of Isaiah. The herdsman Amos writes not like the wise counsellor Daniel; nor does Jonah borrow the notes of Malachi. Every man speaks after his own order. Whatever he was when God called him to be a prophet, that he remains. God consecrates what is already there, and doth not re-cast the man into a new mould. I believe this is an excellent lesson to all the ministers of Christ in these times. How much more useful might many men be if they would speak according to their own character, after their own style. But instead

thereof, the young minister attaches himself to some eminent model, and copies, not only the expressions, but the very tones, the action, nay the whims and absurdities of the master whom he venerates. But if each man, instead of seeking to be another, would be himself; if he would consecrate his powers and talents to God as they are, and bring them out in their native simplicity whether they be polished or rough, the world would be conscious that a man had arisen who was in earnest, and not a mere player, an imitator of another. God himself, I doubt not, will speak more clearly through a man who speaks out of the fullness of his heart, than he will through another who cannot let the stream of divine influence come through him naturally, but must needs seek to turn it into the artificial current of some other man's form of eloquence. I am led to make these observations, because this is specially the case with regard to Amos. Amos was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, and all through his book you find him continually alluding to his peasant life. He seems to have been an honest, homely countryman, and he talks to us about sheep which have been rent in pieces by the lions of the kine of Bashan, of the cart full of sheaves, of sifted corn, and plowmen and vine-dressers. He does not mount to the sublimity of Isaiah, he has no golden mouth like that Chrysostom among the prophets. He never soars to the height of Daniel, he lacks Ezekiel's eagle wing, and the weeping eye of Jeremiah, but he dashes out before you in his first chapter like some untamed irresistible being, and begins--"The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither." And then through the first two chapters he flings firebrands about him with both his hands; he has a flame for Syria, and another for Gaza; he flashes lightning upon Tyrus in a few sentences, and pours a vial of wrath upon Edom; he darts his

sacred ire on Ammon, and devours the palaces of Moab. He stabs his foes in short abrupt sentences, not aiming at eloquence, but speaking always like a herdsman. As Shamgar slew the Philistines not with the sword of Goliath, but with his own ox-goad, so does Amos come out against the sins of his times with no polished shaft taken out of the quiver of the noble, but with his own ox-goad, and right gloriously doth he lay sin dead at his feet.

And now look at my text in the light of what I have already said. It appears that Amos was a skillful man, and able to turn his hand to other useful employments. There was one occupation which was usually given to men who had delicacy of hand and skill, that was the culture of the sycamore fig-tree. You will find that Amos is called in one of the chapters of his own book, "a gatherer of sycamore fruit;" a more correct translation might be a bruiser, a trainer or preparer of sycamore fruit, the sycamore fruit being like a fig, though not quite so excellent in flavour. It was believed in the East that it would never ripen except it was a little bruised, so that some person was employed with an iron comb to scratch and wound the skin. Unwounded the fruit, even when ripe, was too bitter to be eaten, but after it had been wounded, it ripened rapidly, and became sweet, and was not an objectionable article of diet. Now the good man had been wont to be employed by his neighbors, at certain seasons of the year, in bruising their figs that they might become ripe. And now, in one of the visions which God gives to him, he sees neither the seraphim of Isaiah, nor the cherubim of Ezekiel, but he sees a basket of summer fruit, a vision suited to his capacity, and harmonising with his occupation.

There is no need for any labored disquisition; there are no hard words in a herdsman's language, and no great mysteries in a herdsman's vision. There is a basket of fruit which is so ripe that it has been

gathered, and it is a sort of fruit--summer fruit--which will not keep, which will not lay by unto the winter, but which must be eaten at once. Amos sees at once that God's purposes were now ripe with regard to his people Israel, and that the nation itself had become ripe in its sin, so ripe that it must be destroyed. It teaches to us in these modern times, that there is a ripeness of men as well as of summer fruit; there is a ripening in holiness till we are gathered by the hand of Jesus for heaven, and a ripening in sin till we are swept away with the rough hand of death, and are cast away into the rottenness of destruction.

I. I shall use my text then, in three different ways; the first remark being that GOD'S PURPOSES HAVE A RIPENESS.

God always times his decrees. He is never before his time, and he never is so much as a single hour behind. Many men are wise too late; God is always wise, and always proves his wisdom, not only by what he doeth, but by the time when he doeth it. Let us notice two of God's greatest acts, and notice the ripeness of them.

There was the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. God had promised to our forefather Adam in the garden that a mysterious seed of the woman should be born and should bruise the serpent's head. In mysterious signs he had shown to his people that a Messiah was coming, by many of his prophets had he spoken of Immanuel, God with us. But for thousands of years the Lord came not, although sin was rampant and the darkness dense, nothing could excite the Lord to an unwise haste. Nor on the other hand did he stay beyond the proper hour, for when the fulness of time was come God sent fourth his Son, born of a woman made under the law. In heaven we shall probably discover that Christ came to die for our sins precisely at the only fitting moment, that in fact redemption's work could not have been so wisely accomplished at the

gates of the garden of Eden as on Calvary; and that the reign of Herod and the Roman Caesar afforded the most fitting era for the sacrifice of the Cross.

And so shall it be with regard to the second advent of our blessed Lord and Master, we are apt to say, "Why are his chariots so long in coming. Do not the virgins sleep because the bridegroom tarrieth, the wise as well as the foolish, have they not all slumbered and slept." And many be the servants who say in their heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and are ready therefore to beat their fellow-servants, to drink and to be drunken; but cheer your hearts ye who look for his appearing, he will not come too hastily, for why should the sun arise until darkness has had its hour. Nor will he delay his appearing one moment beyond the proper time, for should not the sun beam forth in the morning? We know and are persuaded that when he shall stand a second time upon the earth, it shall be as much the fullness of times for him to come, as it was the fullness of time when he came at first. When his feet stood on Calvary they stood there in good time, and when they shall stand on Olivet, and when he shall judge the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat, then too shall he come at his proper time and his proper season. Watch then, beloved, watch and wait earnestly, be not discouraged or cast down; "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years are but as one day." He shall come, and you shall behold him in his glory, and shall be partakers of the splendor of his reign.

And now I shall wish for a moment to apply this great truth of the ripeness of God's purposes to your own personal affairs. You believe that the advents of Christ are well-timed. Indeed, beloved, so is every act of God. The time when you were called by grace was the proper time for you to be converted. That hour when Jesus looked on you with an eye

of love, when you were dead in sin, was a time of love, and it was a time of wisdom too. God did not wait too long, else you might have been driven to despair or to desperation in sin. He did not come too soon. You may have wished that he had come before, but doubtless he had some end to serve, that in permitting you to learn more fully the lesson of your own sinfulness, you might be the better prepared to adore the infinite, matchless, sovereign grace, which has now plucked you as a brand from the burning. Your calling, I say, was well timed. It came to you not as unripe fruit shaken from the tree, or beaten off by hailstones, but as fruit that was gathered in its season. So, mark you, shall it be with all that occurs to you in life. Your trials always come to you at the right moment. Do you doubt it? Do you say that troubles always follow troubles? that they are not equally enough distributed, and that you generally receive one severe blow just when your strength and patience have been exhausted by the endurance of another? Ah, this is the language of your reason, but the language of your faith should be "Great God, I leave my times and seasons in thy hand, for well I know if thou smitest me again and again, and again, it is that thou mayest multiply to bless me, that my manifold trials may produce in me manifold blessings." So be of good cheer, my hearer. I know that in looking back thou hast seen that thy troubles have come to thee in the right time. Have they not always come just when thou hadst strength to bear them, or else, have they not come just when they were required to wean thee from this world, to deliver thee from carnal security into which thou hadst well nigh fallen; or to wake thee up from some deadly slumber of indifference, which might have destroyed thee. And mark thee, as thy trials so thy deliverances. Thou wantest deliverances now. God will not give it to thee in thy time, but in his. He will not send to thee his mercies before their date. Thou shalt wait

until the tribulation hath had its perfect work, by producing patience; and then the hour of thy extremity shall be the hour of God's opportunity. He knoweth when thy strength is spent, and thou art ready to perish, then shall the Sun of Righteousness arrive with healing beneath his wings. Thy deliverances from trouble shall always come to thee in time enough; but they shall never come too soon, lest thou be proud in thy heart. Learn, thou believer, to be resigned to God's will. Learn to leave all things in his hand. 'Tis pleasant to float along the stream of providence. There is no more blessed way of living than the life of faith upon a covenant-keeping God--to know that we have no care, for he careth for us, that we need have no fear, except to fear him, that we need have no troubles, because we have cast our burdens upon the Lord, and are conscious that he will sustain us. And oh how sweet is it to look forward to the day of our death in this way; to feel that "Plagues and death around us fly," but "Till he please we cannot die;" that we may walk among a thousand graves, but no grave shall open its mouth for us; that we may stand where pestilence is blazing forth and devouring the nations as the fire devours the stubble, but we must lie secure. We are immortal till our work is done. God's purpose for our death shall not be fulfilled till that purpose is ripe, and surely we would not have him wait longer than his appointed time.

I take this first head by way of cheering my own heart and yours; for I am persuaded that the doctrine of predestination,--the blessed truth of providence--is one of the softest pillows upon which the Christian can lay his head, and one of the strongest staffs upon which he may lean in his pilgrimage along this rough road. Cheer up, Christian! Things are not left to chance: no blind fate rules the world. God hath purposes, and those purposes are fulfilled. God hath plans, and those plans are

wise, and never can be dislocated. Oh trust thou in him and thou shalt have each fruit in its season, the mercy in its time, the trial in its period, and the deliverance in its needed moment.

II. And now I turn to the second point--that NATIONS HAVE THEIR RIPENESS, AND THAT WHEN THEY COME TO THEIR RIPENESS THEY MUST BE DESTROYED.

We may see in this basket of summer fruit a picture of them. In the case of these summer fruits there was a need that they should be at once eaten. And there is a need when a nation has become ripe in sin that it should be given up to destruction. There are such things as national sins, and there are consequently such things as national punishments. In looking back upon the history of the world, though skeptics might entertain a doubt as to individual transgression and personal punishment, they must confess that there have been such things as national judgments sent from the hand of God. If I could take you to-day to the dreary wilderness of Babylon, I would bid you listen to the hooting of the owl, and shiver amid the lonely ruins. I would remind you that this was the throne of one of the greatest monarchies. You ask, "And why were these people swept from off the face of the earth? Why has the palace been consumed with fire, and the beautiful city become desolate?" We can give you but one answer, that the sin of this people at last became so intolerable that from the very force of its own rottenness it crumbled to decay. We take you again to Greece, and bid you stand among the fallen pillars of its glorious temples; we show you the broken memorials of its ancient idolatry; we point to the fact that all the glories of Alexander, of Macedon, have long since been eclipsed; and if you should ask the same question as you did at Babylon, "Who slew all these and gave their cities for a prey?" it would not be a sufficient answer to assure you that the tooth of time

had devoured these palaces, or that passing ages and the natural shifting of the focus of civilisation had made those things totter to their fall. It was the sin of the Grecian state that brought upon it its ruin. If it had not been given up to inordinate luxury; if its hero soldiers had not degenerated into robbers; if its statesmen had retained their early integrity; if the nation had been as manly, as pain-enduring, as upright, as they were in days gone by, Greece had not ceased to exist; the Roman iron could not have been a match for the Corinthian brass; the battle would have lasted long, and Spartan valor would have driven back the Roman legions. Had they been free in heart they would have been free from the iron yoke. They had enslaved themselves long before the Western empire had subdued them. So was it with old Rome. Long did God endure with it. Emperor succeeded Emperor--or rather, let me correct myself--fiend succeeded fiend. It seemed as if hell strove to outdo itself by sending forth a greater monster than the last; all of them brutish, with but few exceptions, most of them cruel, every one of them capricious. And God bore long with the sin of the old palaces of Rome, long did he endure her base idolatries, and her cup that was filled with the blood of the saints.

But at last he spoke, and it was done. The northern swarms soon swept away the flimsy remnants of an empire, whose moth had been its own corruption. We believe that it is the same with Rome at present--the Popedom. Iniquity had been heaped upon iniquity, worse than even Pagan Rome was guilty of. The persecutions of Pagan Rome against God's saints have been excelled by Popish Rome. If there were fiends in Rome before, I know not how to describe these men who have persecuted God's saints in days gone by, and yet could claim to be vicars of God. Oppression has been heaped upon oppression, blood hath followed blood, iniquity hath cried unto iniquity, and lo, the sword of God is at the gate of

Rome. Lo, God, even now in the thunder-cloud hangs over the palace of the Vatican. And if for awhile the judgment shall be withheld, it is because the iniquity is not yet full. Another Perugia, another slaughter of innocent men, another attack upon the gospel, another attempt to burn the Scriptures, and Rome shall have consummated her guilt, and then shall the nations of the world eat her flesh, and devour her as with fire, and a great cry shall go up from earth, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, is fallen!" and then shall be heard the song in heaven, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the smoke ariseth for ever and ever, and the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Let us not, however, in our self-righteousness, fancy that this fact has no relationship to us. We as a people have been verily guilty. I trust it cannot be said of us that our iniquity is full, but much, very much of sin hath there been. Has not drunkenness run down our street? Hath not infidelity had its favored haunts in all our towns? Has not Sabbath-breaking been a continual and a crying sin? Hath not England grievously offended God in thrusting her poisonous drugs upon an Empire which sought them not? Have we not often been the aggressors, and in our lust for the extension of empire in the East hath not many a deed been done for which an Englishman might blush? We have all good need when we are making intercession for the nation, to repent before God for our national sins. We are a proud people; no nation upon the earth can match us for boasting. We have larger words to speak concerning our own dignity than any other race of men. It were well for us if we had humbler words before the throne of God. I believe we are a more highly favored nation than even Israel of old. God hath done more for Britain, or certainly as much, as he did for Abraham's race, and even if we have not rebelled and revolted as often as did Israel in the wilderness, yet our little rebellions, if they were so, would be great because of the

greatness of God's goodness. Oh Christians! be in earnest, that this land may be filled with grace; be earnest in prayer, that the torrent of our iniquities may be dried up, lest haply that supposition of a great historian should at last become a fact, and the New Zealander should yet sit on the broken arch of London Bridge, wondering that so great a city could have passed away. We are not sure that Nineveh and Babylon were as great as this metropolis, but they certainly might have rivalled it, and yet there is nothing left thereof, and the dragon and the owl dwell in what was the very center of commerce and civilization. And may it not be so with us, and may not the name of Anglo-Saxon be blotted out, unless we repent, unless we seek God and pray that this nation may be in covenant with him and may abide faithful to him, even till the Lord Jesus Christ shall come and absorb all monarchies into his own great empire which shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.

III. I shall now pass to that which is the main business of this morning's work. May God help me therein, and give both physical and spiritual strength. I now come to deal with each man before me. The basket of summer fruit which Amos saw before him, I would now bring before your own eyes. You see it--the basket full of fruits--quite ripe and requiring to be eaten. Here is the picture of what some of us are, and what all of us must be.

In the first place, with the righteous man there is a time of ripening. In one sense the moment a man is converted he is fit for heaven; in another sense he is not fit; otherwise God would take him at once to himself. The Christian, when first converted, is but a bud upon the tree, a mere blossom. There is need that he grow unto perfection, and that that fruit should become ripe fruit. Christians are every day ripening by the perfecting energy of the Holy Ghost, without whom they

can never advance in the divine life. But the Holy Spirit uses means, and upon these I shall enlarge. Believers are each day ripening by the care of God, the great husbandman who looks for fruit from men, and walks among the trees each day, and bids the sunshine of his love and the dew of his kindness fall upon them, that they may bring forth much fruit. They are ripened by every providence which passes over them. The cold wind ripens them; even winter's frost, which might destroy our fruit, ripens that which grows in the garden of the Lord. The sorest tribulation which ever exercises a believer is a ripening dispensation, and is making him ready to stand in the full development of his grace before the glory of his Father's throne. In fact, without affliction no Christian ever can ripen. He is like the sycamore fig of Amos, there must be the scratching of the rind of the fruit; there must be a bruising with the iron comb, or else ripe the Christian will not become. We may grow in some things by prosperity; but true ripeness in grace can only be obtained in adversity. Our cares, our losses, our crosses, our depression of spirits, our temptations from without and from within,--these are all ripening dispensations, they are making us ready for the time when our beloved Lord shall come and gather us into the basket, like apples of gold in baskets of silver. We are being ripened each day, I trust, by what we hear under the ministry, and by what we read in God's Word. The means of grace co-act with God's dealings in providence. Our prayers ripen us; the blessed Supper of our Lord helps to ripen us; our seasons of fellowship with Jesus--the sweet promises which are every day fulfilled; the assistances which are rendered necessary by the incidents of each day--all these things work together for good to them that love God. They are dividing us each day from the earth: loosening our roots; cutting the strings which bind us here below; pluming our wings for the last great flight--when, leaving

earth with all its ties behind us we shall enter into the realities of the bliss which remaineth for the people of God.

But you ask me in what respect the Christian is ripening. I reply he is ripening in knowledge, he is learning each day what he knew not before. He begins now to spell over the heavenly alphabet, and there be some of the words of the celestial tongue which he can speak most plainly. He begins to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths and lengths and breadths, and he knows the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Things which were mysterious to him once are plain enough now, and riddles are become simplicities. He is no more a child in knowledge, but is become a man in understanding. He shall ripen in knowledge until he shall know even as he is known. So does he advance each day in experience; that experience of his which was but as a little unripe fruit, has now swelled out into the full orb of the ripening pomegranate. He has felt, and tasted, and handled of the good Word of God. Religion is not a theory to him now; it is a matter of fact. He knows whom he has believed, and he is persuaded that he is able to keep that which he has committed to him. And increasing thus in knowledge and experience he ripens also in spirituality. He becomes less worldly, he shakes off more and more the cares which once were chains to him. He bears his trials more easily than he once did. A great wave would have drowned him now merely washes his loins with its foamy crest. He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is not now grasping after this world's wealth, he seeks to fill a treasury into which the moth cannot enter, and where thieves cannot break through and steal. And as he ripens thus in spirituality, he ripens in savour, his conversation becomes more full of marrow; he is not now like Pharoah's lean kine, nor like the ears of corn that were dried and shrivelled in the east wind. He is an

instructor of the ignorant and a teacher of babes. You listen to him, you watch his daily walk and conversation. He is one from whom you may learn much, a person who is to be imitated, for there is a sweet smelling perfume of fellowship with Christ about him in all that he saith and all that he doth. He is a ripe Christian, ripening for heaven; and you may add to this that he now becomes more kind in spirit than he was before. The asperities of his youth give way to cordial kindness in his old age. He learns to overlook faults which irritated him when he was younger; he learns to bear with the young and with the silly, for he remembers that he was once young and foolish too. He has compassion for those that are out of the way, and a kind and encouraging word for the distressed, and he goes about with a beaming countenance, looking indeed like a ripe fruit with a rich bloom upon it, a pleasant sight for the great husbandman.

If, brethren and sisters, this is accompanied with old age, it is indeed a fair vision to see a Christian fully ripe. I think if I needed an illustration of one who as often as I saw him, always seemed to be fruit fully ripe, and whose recent death thoroughly well justifies my belief, I might refer to that venerable and excellent servant of God, Dr. Fletcher. He had in his youth sharp and severe trials and troubles, but they helped to ripen him. He had to bear up continually with arduous labor, always sweetened with unusual success. My acquaintance with him was only in the declining years of his life. He was always as I knew him, an example of a ripe Christian. He had always a kind word ready upon his tongue, and never wanted a generous thought bubbling up in his heart. If an enemy spoke against you, he would say, "Never mind them, let them write until they wear the nibs from their pens, and do not answer them." If he suspected that others thought harshly of you, he would always have an excuse for the young beginner, or if he did not

make an excuse in your presence, yet he would give you a word of encouragement. Ah! I dare say many of you have seen him during this last year or two. That noble countenance, that fatherly expression, that overflowing love, were all signs that he was getting ready for the hand of the blessed Master to take him to himself. God forbid we should have wished him to be here longer! Was he not ripe? Let him then be taken home, God forbid we should have desired that he had gone earlier; he would not have been ripe, but when fully ripe the Master removed him. I cast my eye round upon some of you, dearly beloved; some of you whose heads are bald, and others of you who wear that crown of glory, woven of grey hairs, and I do trust it will be so with you, that each day shall be making you more and more meet for your Father's presence. So when the silver cord shall be loosed and the golden bowl shall be broken, when they that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and when the pitcher shall be broken at the cistern, and the wheel shall be broken at the fountain, may your spirit return in gladness to God who gave it, that you may rejoice in him for ever and for ever. I do not like to see a Christian die like a boy who leaves his play because he is tired of it, and I do not on the other hand, like to see a Christian go from this world like a boy who is flogged out of his play and who is sorry to leave it. I like to see him like a fair ship which has all its cargo on board and all its passengers on deck, the flags are flying and the pennants streaming in the gale, and all the canvas is fully stretched, and it waits till it is just high tide, the tide begins to roll out towards the sea, and it sails on the head of the tide with the wind bellying out the sails, and so hath the soul an abundant entrance into the joy of its Lord. May it be yours and mine, as many years as we shall live, to be each of us ripening for the "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

Lastly, and very solemnly, now, may God the Holy Ghost bless what I shall have to say concerning a ripeness with which the sinful and ungodly, all of you who are unconverted, are ripening. You are being ripened from within; the depravity of your own heart is developing itself every hour, and though the heart can grow no worse, yet will the outward life grow worse by a ripening process from within. The fermentation of your own depravity shall prepare you for destruction. Satan too is daily busy with you, to try and make you grow in vice. He is an apt teacher, for well is he skilled in it, and he will leave no stone unturned to make the young beginner in sin sit in the chair of Belial, and become a very Doctor of Damnation. Yea, as a creature planted in the field of Providence you are daily ripening in sin. Are you prosperous--do you not become proud? Do things go amiss with you--do you not murmur against God? And are not your pride and murmuring each a species of ripening for the great day of God's wrath? Ah! and I speak to some to-day, who are getting ripe in sin by being taught and instructed in evils which they never knew before? Young man, have you been lately taken into a firm where you have been taught by other young men, more advanced than yourself, some new folly, some new iniquity which you never knew in your country home? You are being ripened for hell. Old man, have you just come to that period in life when you are able to teach others iniquity, and guide others into sin? You are not as Amos, who could ripen fruit for God, but you are become a bruiser of sycamore fruit for Satan; helping Satan to ripen the fruit in his own diabolical garden. I speak to some here this morning who have strolled into this Hall from curiosity, who are growing very ripe in sin. You look back upon the days of your boyhood now, with wonder--wondering, as you say, that you could ever have been "so green," so foolish as you then were. Ah! but what is your wisdom now?

Has it not been an advancement in guilt? Have you not looked upon sin so long that you are being changed into its image, from iniquity unto iniquity, as by the very work of Satan himself. Are not some of you conscious that you know things now that you did not know years ago and that you can indulge with hardness of heart in crimes that would have startled you in days gone by? Oh, look back I beseech you, upon the hours of your comparative innocence, and mourn over the thought that you are growing riper, and riper, and riper each day, and everything that happens to you is conspiring to make you rotten-ripe. Ere long you will fall from life's spreading tree and utterly perish.

And do you ask me in what it is that the sinner ripens? I could not give you particulars in such a case as this, but certainly most sinners ripen in knowledge of sin; they ripen in love to sin, and they ripen also in the hardness of heart which enables them to commit sin with impunity. And with some, sin has attained such a ripeness that they dare to blaspheme God. They have grown so rotten ripe, that they will even dare to say there is no God, or think that he is blind, or ignorant, and will not see and punish sin in the sinner. It is an awful sign of nearness to hell when a man begins to think that he can doubt the existence of a God. I consider that time is lost in controverting with men upon this point. We are not to controvert but to denounce. I should not expect to teach a serpent to change its hissing for music, nor do I think that while men are unregenerate it is of much use to teach them to change their in infidelity for formality. God himself must convert those who have gone into infidelity with his own word, for our reasonings are powerless. We must pray for them; yet must they be left in his hands, for it is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord do fall therein.

I may have in my presence, too, some who have become so rotten-ripe

that they will not only curse God themselves, and despise religion, and violate every precept of it, but they will not tolerate religion near them. They cast slander upon every godly action; they persecute their relations who fear the Lord. Ah, sirs, ye do but show what spirit ye are of. Your actions do but discover the inward baseness and depravity of your hearts. Take heed to yourselves--take heed. When ye see the ripe fruit upon the tree ye expect it shall soon be gathered, and when I hear of those ill-deeds of yours, I may well expect that your damnation shall not long tarry, but that the pains of death shall soon close themselves upon you. Ye are ripening, sinners, ye are ripening, and unless God change your hearts, your gathering time shall soon come. And for what are you ripening? You are ripening for death--ripening for eternal judgment, and ripening for the wrath of God. Will you take this fact home with you? If I cannot speak to you this morning as I would, at any rate I will speak to you as I can. Oh unconverted men and women, I conjure you take this with you, you are ripening for hell. And some fruits ripen very quickly, and those that ripen slowly ripen surely, and the gathering time shall come. The righteous shall be gathered, and be as apples of gold in baskets of silver; and you shall be gathered and be an grapes of Gomorrah and be cast into the winepress of divine wrath to be trodden in his indignation. Does the prospect please you? Are you prepared to make your bed in hell, and to lay down in everlasting burnings? Oh, remember, if you take the road, you must take the end; if you will have your ripening time of sin, then your rotting time must be a time of damnation. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." He will not change his dispensations for you. "He that goeth on in his iniquity, hardening his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Oh, my dear hearers, I could stand and weep over some of you. My soul weepeth now at the thought of the many who have been in

this hall and have gone away to despise the Word which has been preached, and to be ripened in their sin by the very efforts which have been made to turn them away from their iniquity. And shall it be so with you? Shall Sabbath after Sabbath only ripen you for the flames? Sirs, shall earnest warnings only supply faggots for your burning? Shall the tender heart of one who would die to save you only increase the guilt which you acquire by despising that earnestness? Oh, what multitudes in this hall have been changed, renewed, converted, and some of them were the rotten-ripe ones. When I look over the Church-book we have to record those who have been added to our fellowship, containing the history of their conversion, I often clap my hands with delight, for there are those in the Church now who were not simply drunkards and swearers, but who were the worst of drunkards and vilest of blasphemers. We have some who were not content with being damned themselves, but did their best to turn wife and children from the way of truth, and hated and scorned that which was good. Many a man has come to me when he was about to be added to the Church, and his first speech has been, "Will you ever forgive me, sir?" I have said, "Forgive what;" "Why because," said he, "there was no word in the English language that was bad enough for you, and yet I had never seen you in my life, and I had no reason for speaking like that. And oh if I have cursed God's people, and said all manner of evil of them, will you forgive me?" My reply has been, "I have nothing to forgive? I am sure if you have spoken against me I am heartily glad that you are ready to confess the sin to God, but as far as I was concerned there was no offense given and none taken." And oh how glad have I been when that man has said that his heart was broke and that he repented of all his sins, and Christ had put away all his iniquities, and that he wished to follow the Lord and make confession of his faith. May that be my happy

lot this morning; or instead thereof, must I, the minister of this congregation, behold some of you in perdition? Must I, my hearers, if I be saved myself, stand and look upon you cast down into perdition by the eternal God? I cannot bear the thought. I know not whether it is pleasing to you--but surely it cannot be. Do you wish for ever to be cast away from God?--for ever! for ever! for ever! Are you so mad as to dash yourself against the point of Jehovah's spear! Say what pleasure is there in casting yourself upon the bosses of his buckler? Why will you cast yourself into an oven of devouring wrath! What need is there, sinner, that thou shouldst rend thyself in pieces, and be thine own tormentor? And yet every sin is a mixing of the poison that destroys thy own soul, every act of lust is a kindling of the fire that shall consume thee. Oh! I conjure thee, turn!

O Lord do thou the sinner turn. O Spirit of God come down and work with the most obdurate and hardened of men; and let sinners who are ripened for destruction now be renewed in heart, that they may become fruits of grace, and at last be ripened for eternal glory.

Chapter 55

Tender Words Of Terrible Apprehension!

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 4, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"The wicked shhall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God."

Psalm 9:17.

MANY of God's ministers have been accused of taking pleasure in preaching upon this terrible subject of "the wrath to come." We were, indeed, strange beings, if so doleful a subject could afford us any comfort! I would count myself to be infinitely less than a man if it did not cause me more pain in delivering myself of the impending sentence of condemnation, than it can possibly cause my Hearers in the listening to it. God's ministers, I can assure you, if they feel it to be often their solemn duty, feel it always to be a heavy burden to speak of the terrors of the Law! To preach Christ is our delight! To uplift His Cross is the joy of our heart; our Master is our witness--we love to blow the silver trumpet, and we have blown it with all our might! But knowing the terror of the Lord, these solemn things lie upon our conscience; and while it is hard to preach of them, it were still harder to bear the doom which must rest upon the silent minister; the unfaithful watchman who did not warn the sinner! He must, therefore, eternally bear the sinner's blood upon his head, because he warned him not! Think not, this morning, that I am about to speak upon the terrors of the world to come. I shall not do so. I shall but open the subject by making one or two remarks which may, in some measure, shield us from the enmity of those who accuse us of harshness of spirit when we lay bare these predicted woes. You must confess, my dear Hearers, that

Jesus Christ was the most tender-hearted of men. Never was there one of so sympathetic a disposition; but not all the Prophets put together--though some of them as stern as Elijah, though many of them seemed commissioned expressly to dwell upon terrible things in righteousness--not all of them put together can equal in thunderclaps the sound of that still voice of Him, who albeit He did not cry nor lift up His voice in the street, spoke more of Hell and the wrath to come than any that preceded Him! The loving lips of Jesus have furnished us with the greatest revelations of God's vengeance against iniquity! None ever spoke with such terrible emphasis! No preacher ever used figures of such glaring horror, as did Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the Friend of publicans and sinners! Let me remind you that the wrath of God, and the judgment of the Day of the Lord cannot be trifling matters. How emphatically are we told in Scripture, that it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Upon such a subject we cannot afford to trifle! Besides, the mystery of Calvary indicates to us that sin must deserve at God's hand a terrible penalty. Did Jesus suffer so bitterly to save men, and will not the unsaved endure bitterness, indeed? Must the eternal and holy Son of God, upon whom sin was only an imputed thing--must He bleed and die and offer up His life, with His soul exceedingly heavy even unto death--and is the world to come a thing about which men can afford to sport or idly dream? Foreshadows have fallen on our path, from which we dismally recoil. You know that sin, even in this world, is a tormentor of unequalled cruelty. How miserable are some men when they are chased by conscience, when the furies of sin have been let loose upon them even in this world! Some of you may know, if you are not given up to hardness of heart, what it is to be conscious of guilt, and to be hunted about in every place, whether you sleep or whether you wake,

with a consciousness of your transgression. Many a man has hurried himself to a premature grave, has sought to end his misery by the knife or by the halter, not because he was enduring Hell, but only of the present penalty of sin. What, then, must be "the wrath to come"? Again, I say, it cannot be a theme at which any but fools would presume to jest, nor can it be such that we can, any of us, afford to disregard its trumpet-tongued warning! That dread sentence in our text ought to ring like a death knell in your ears, if you are among the wicked. "The wicked shall be cast into Hell"--the drunkard, the swearer, the fornicator, and such like shall receive their well-deserved portion in the bottomless pit of Hell! God will not treat them with leniency; He will not wink at their follies; He will not pass over their sins, as though they were but mistakes, or little errors. He will mete out punishment for such serious offenses! But observe the companions of the wicked, those who are to be the sharers with these profane ones in their eternal punishment. They are such as forget God. If I mistake not, I am addressing a very large number of those who forget God. It may be I have a few here of the outwardly wicked. Let them hear the text in all its fullness! But, doubtless, I have many hundreds who come under the second description--they forget God. Oh, let them feel the full force of such a text as this! They must be companions hereafter with those whom they would not associate with now; they must have the destiny of men, whom perhaps they now look down upon with contempt--they must be cast into Hell with the wicked--with those who are infidels in the sight of God, and demoralized among men.

Now, this morning, I shall first endeavor, as God's servant, to charge this sin upon the conscience of men. Secondly, to unmask the real reasons for this forgetfulness of God. Thirdly, to refute such excuses any heart may make; and then, come lovingly and earnestly to persuade

you to repentance of this sin.

I. First, let me CHARGE THIS SIN UPON YOU.

I wish not now to preach to you in the mass, but to each man as an individual. You can each judge in your own conscience how far what I say is applicable to you. If the fear of God, and the love of Jesus are in your hearts, these accusations belong not to you. Occupy yourself with earnestly praying that the Word may go where the reproof is needed--that the arrow may reach its mark. You who have faith in Christ, lift up your souls and pray, "O Lord, send home Your arrow in the heart that is forgetful of You."

Sinner! I charge you with forgetting God--for sure I am, you forget His Infinite Majesty. Do you know what it is to be overawed with a sense of the Glory of God? Have you ever thought of Him, before whom the angels veil their faces with their wings and solemnly cry, "Holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts"? Why, you know very well that the Glory of God is to you as much a mere matter of speculation, as the glory of some great eastern prince! As you are never affected with the splendor of the Persian Court, so are you just as little subdued and overawed by the splendor of the King of Heaven! Do you not walk about this world as though God had no Throne, or as if the Throne of the universe were entirely vacant? To Him you give no songs; before Him you offer no prayers; to Him you have made no confession of your littleness, and unto Him you have ascribed no songs of praise for His greatness. You are unconscious of His majesty! The thought never strikes you, it never humbles you, never casts you down; if now and then, when you behold the starry heavens, you are a little subdued by the power which the mighty works of God will certainly have upon your intellect--if sometimes in the midst of thunder and lightning, your spirit bows before the awful Majesty of God--these are but as fits and starts in the slumber of your

habitual forgetfulness! This is not your abiding condition of soul, it is but a spasm. The spirit of your heart is not adoration of His Majesty, but forgetfulness of His Glory.

Remember, too, oh Sinner, that you have forgotten God in His mercies. Day after day you have fed at the table of His bounty; He has supplied your means of livelihood; you have lacked nothing. But how seldom have you ever thought of thanking Him? You have ascribed your wealth to your own prudence; your competence to your own industry. If you have a god at all, that god is your strong self! You thank yourself for the clothes that are upon your back, and for the food which cheers your spirit; and all this while you know not that the breath in your nostrils comes from Him! You know not without Him there would no marrow in your bones--no power in your nerves--without Him you would fall back to your mother dust, and crumble to the earth which brought you forth. Why, you do not praise Him! You have songs for your lusts, but none for your God! You have praise for your earthly friends, and thanks for those who help you here, but He is as much forgotten by you as He is by the beasts that perish! You call not your family about you; you say not unto your little ones, "Come, bless your father's God." You lift not holy hands over your table, thanking God for every mercy that is there; you live as though these things came to you by chance! God is not in all your thoughts; and though He draws your curtain every night, and sheds light upon you every day--though it is His earth upon which you tread, His air which you breathe, His water which you must drink--yet He is as much forgotten by you as though He were dead and had ceased to be!

Consider how constantly you forget his Laws. When there is an action proposed to you, how seldom do you pause and say, "Is this right in the sight of God?" You are careful of the laws of men, but the Laws of God

are waste paper to you. You would not cheat your neighbor; you would not rob your companion; but how often will men rob God! Men who are scrupulously honest in giving to man his due, and in "rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's," give not, "unto God that which is God's." Man is proud and self-willed; he loves to be his own master, and to have his own way, and he cries, "Let me break His bands asunder and cast away His cords from me!" He finds that the easiest way to do this is to ignore the fact that God ever made laws--or that He is the world's moral Governor--or that He will reward and punish. So the sinner goes on in his iniquity; God is not in all his thoughts. I charge this home upon many, many of you now present! Look to your own heart, and see if the accusation is not just. Surely many of you must plead guilty to it. You forget His Majesty, as though He were not "King of kings and Lord of lords." You forget His mercies, as though He were not the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And you forget His Laws, as though He had not a right to your service--as though His service were not freedom, and obedience to His Laws a delight. The wicked forget God!

And oh how often do you forget His Presence, too! In the midst of a crowd, you are conscious, every one of you, of the presence of man, but perhaps this very moment you are ignoring the fact that God is here. In your shop on the morrow how carefully you will take heed that your conduct is circumspect if the eyes of your fellow man is observant of you. But before the Presence of God, with the Eternal eyes upon you, you can presume to practice the paltry tricks of trade, or to do that which you would not have revealed to mortals for all the world! You are careful to shut the door and draw the curtains, and hide yourselves in secret from men--strangely forgetting that when the curtain is drawn, and the door is shut, God is still there! No walls can shut Him out; no

darkness can conceal the deed from His eyes. He is everywhere and sees us in all things! Why, my Hearers, we are all guilty in this respect, in a measure; we forget the actual Presence and the overlooking eyes of God; we talk as we dare not talk if we were thinking that He heard us; we act as we would not act if we were conscious that God was there; we indulge in thoughts which we would cast out if we could but bear in perpetual remembrance the abiding Presence of God, the Judge of the whole earth! Forgetting God is so common a sin, that the Believer, himself, needs to repent of it, and ask to have it forgiven, while the unbeliever may solemnly confess this to be his crying sin, a piece of guilt in respect to which he dare not profess innocence--God is not in all, perhaps not in anyof your thoughts!

And, O sinner, how forgetful you have been of God's justice! How seldom do you set before your eyes--

"The pomp of that tremendous day, When He with clouds shall come." You sin as though sin were a thing of today, and would not be thought of tomorrow! You go to your follies, and your pleasures as though God had no Book of Remembrance in which to write down your sins, and no tablets of brass on which to engrave, as with an iron pen, all your iniquities! Why, if sin were but a mistake; if iniquity could never be punished; if Hell had resolved itself into a few dying embers; if the Throne of God were shaken--if the balances were dashed from His hands; if His sword had grown blunt, men could not be more callous, or more careless than they are now! What is it but forgetfulness of God, who has sworn that He will by no means clear the guilty? What is it but obliviousness of the fact that God avenges, and that He will surely give to every transgression its just recompense of reward? What is it but this, that leads men to sin greedily with both hands, and to go on in their iniquities as quietly and as peaceably as though they were serving God

with all their hearts, and hoping to stand before Him accepted in their own righteousness? If a heathen were to come and walk among us, would he ever suspect us of having a God at all?

In the old days of the Spaniards, when the Spaniards had invaded Mexico, a large number of Indians had fled to Cuba for shelter. One of them, the chief of the tribe, gathering together his companions, assured them that the Spaniards' god was gold, and having a chest of it, he thought that it would be best for them to propitiate the Spaniard's god, that they might be no more subject to the Spaniards' cruelty. They accordingly offered sacrifice before this box of gold, and danced around it till they had wearied themselves, and then fearing the presence of so great a god in their midst, they cast it into the depths of the sea that it might not in future disturb them even if they had made a mistake in their prayers. Sensible heathens those! Very sensible heathens, indeed! For surely, if they should walk through London among many men, they might make the same mistake, but it would be a very little mistake--it would be as near the truth as possible! Their wealth, their substance, their worldly business, as it were, painted on their retina--always before their eyes--but the God to whom they build their temples, being behind their backs, utterly and entirely forgotten! Why, Sirs, if God were taken away--if there were no God--it would be but a very little loss to some of you! You would not be like Micah of old, who, when the sons of Dan stole his seraphim, ran after them crying, "They have taken away my gods." No, surely, you love not the true God, as much as he loved the false one! Were God taken away, you might clap your hands for very joy, for you would say, "He was never a Person whom I esteemed; I never had any reverence for Him; I can do better without a God than I could do with one; I can feel vastly more comfortable in my course of life without God to pry into

all my ways, weigh all my actions, and declare that He will award to me, at last, a recompense for all my sins." I charge home, then, upon your consciences this guilt, that you belong to the number of those who forget God! If it is not so with you, thank God, and rejoice before Him; but if you do forget God, let this great trumpet sound in your ears like the trumpet of the Day of Doom--"The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God."

II. Now I want to UNMASK THE REASONS OF THIS FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. Sinner, you who forget God, I tell you that the reason of your forgetfulness of Him is as great a sin as the forgetfulness itself! In the first place, you do not remember Him because the thought of Him makes you afraid. You know that you have offended Him; you are conscious that you can not meet Him with joy and peace and, therefore, you are like Adam, when he hid himself among the trees of the Garden, and God has need to cry unto you, "Adam, where are you?" If you had not sinned, nothing would give you greater delight than the society of God as the Father from whom you did derive your being; and if your sin were now washed away, and your heart renewed by the Spirit, instead of dreading the thought of God, it would be full of delight to you! You would say, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God; when shall I come and appear before God?" It is your sinthat makes you dread the Presence of your Judge! He who knows that he is innocent, though he may lay in jail, longs for the day when the sessions shall come round, or when the assizes shall be held. And if he hears the trumpet in the street proclaiming that the judge has come, he is glad, for he says--"Now shall I have deliverance"--but the guilty man always dreads the eyes of the judge. But is this wise on your part? Remember, while you forget Him, He does not forget you! You may cover your head, but you cannot escape by merely hiding from yourself the

thought of your doom! The foolish ostrich, when driven by the hunter, buries its head in the sand, and fancies it is safe, whereas it is all the more certain to meet with death! It is so with you; you shut your eyes upon a doom which is certain. It were greatly wise if you would but open your eyes! It were the most prudent act that you could do--instead of shunning your God--to sit down solemnly and think of Him. Let His justice impress your heart. Let His mercy encourage you to seek His face. And His love, working in your spirit, shall renew your soul. Forgetfulness of God is profound folly, but remembrance of God is to the soul her highest wisdom! You dread God, oh Sinner, and therefore, it is why you forget Him!

Besides, the thought of God is irksome to you. It affords you no joy. Were I to make you sit down for 10 minutes and think of nothing but God, you would impatiently look at the clock till the 10 minutes were passed. Even now, though I speak in earnest, you would rather I were speaking upon some other theme. Your heart revolts; you ask, "Why should I think of God? It will not make my heart dance within me, nor my eyes sparkle." And why? Because you do not love God! We seek the company of those whom we love, and if you loved God, you would like to hear of Him; your spirit would long to get nearer and nearer to Him, and your desire would be to be like He, and at last to see Him face to face! You love not God; it is a solemn charge to bring against you, but as long as you forget Him, I cannot help accusing you.

Yet another sin underlies the fact that you do not like to have God in your thoughts. Your real reason is because you find that thinking of God, and going on in sin, are two things that are incompatible with one another. You say, "I cannot go to the theater, and carry God in my heart with me there. I cannot sit down at the ale-house with the profane, and have a thought of God's Presence with me there. It is not

easy for me to go to any haunt of vice or sin, and still carry with me the recollection of the Omniscient eyes." No, Sinner, dishonest in business, you know you could not practice the arts of your trade if you did always keep God before your eyes! You are conscious that the two things will not suit each other; you are quite certain that these are two principles that will no more mix than fire and water, or light and darkness. So you prefer your sins, before God; you love the lusts of the flesh and the delights thereof--the sins of this world, and the reward thereof--better than you love Him who made you and who, if you love Him, will take you up to dwell with Himself forever! Sin once hated, God is loved--but sin loved, God is abhorred! When a man knows that he has been stealing something, and has a parcel of goods about him which is not his own, he will take care not to go on the same side of the street with the policeman--and when a man has been doing something wrong, he is quite certain not to go near his God, for he wishes not to be discovered--he desires not to be detected. He is like Adam in his nakedness; he would sew fig leaves together, and run from the Presence of God, because he knows that he is naked, and cannot stand before his Maker's face.

These are solemn considerations. Let them sink deep into your heart. Steel not your conscience against them. If they are true, let them have full weight with you, and who knows, while I thus speak the arrows of conviction may be piercing your heart? And what are they?. Are they not gracious weapons by which God slays us first, in order that He may afterwards renew us with the Divine Life?

III. Oh, that I could SLAY EVERY EXCUSE WHICH ANY OF YOU MAY BRING FOR FORGETFULNESS OF GOD!

"But," you ask, "is not a man excusable for forgetting God if he has not had enough in early youth to impress God upon his memory?" Ah, Sir,

then some among you in this respect are inexcusable, indeed! You can remember that one of the first sounds your ears ever heard was the name of Jesus; one of the first sights your infant eyes ever beheld was your mother, with her lips moving in silent prayer while tears were falling upon your infant brow. She was praying, then, that you might be dedicated to God. Do you remember that family meeting which was held each morning, when the big Bible was opened, and your father read from Holy Scripture the Words of Truth? Have you forgotten the prayers which he then put up for you, when he said, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You! Oh Lord, save the kindred of Your servant; may they all be bound up in the bundle of life with the seal of the Lord my God." Have you forgotten your mother's personal appeal to you? The Bible in which she wrote your name with that prayer--and you little knew how well she meant that prayer--that prayer in the beginning of the Book, that you might know Him whom that Bible had revealed? Have you forgotten that earnest charge your father gave you when you first came to London to be bound apprentice, or to take a job in some large shop--how he conjured you by the living God not to be led astray?--Not to fall into sin? And now gray hairs are on your head and yourchildren are grown up, too, and perhaps the grandchild may sit upon your knee, and your father's prayers have not dwindled from your memory! Nor have your mother's tears been utterly blotted out. I say, if you remember not God, you cannot plead the excuse of the heathen, even if they are without excuse--for God is to be seen in the visible world--you are without any cloak for your sin, for you have had the name, the Person, the Being of God represented to you by those who could best reach your heart and best enlist your attention! If some of you--and I may be speaking to such--if some of you have ceased to attend the House of God--if you have given up even the outward observances of religion, at least let

this be on your mind--that in the Last Great Day you cannot look your father in the face and say, "Sir, you who did bring me forth; my blood is on your head." Nor can you look on her that bore you, and say to her--"Woman, I curse the breasts on which I hung, because the heart beneath it yielded no sympathy for my eternal state, and never beat with anxious prayers that I might be saved." I strip you of this excuse--what other have you now to make?

Maybe you tell me that to think of God always and not to forget Him is very difficult. Be it so, but let me ask you-- have you ever made the attempt? Have you ever tried to think of God? No, you know that instead thereof, you have often strived to thrust the thought out of doors! And when it has come into your heart, you have looked upon it as an intruder, and you have either said to it with the politeness of Felix, "Go your way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for you;" or else with the harshness but honesty of Ahab, you have said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" You know right well that you do not check yourself in the middle of a speech with the thought--"But I am forgetting God." You do not correct yourself in the very center of an action, and turn from it because you are conscious that you are permitting the Word of God to slip from your memory! No, Sir, you have tried to remember a thousand things, but you never tried to remember your God! You make memoranda of your business; take out from your pocket that little ivory tablet, now, and see how the engagements for the next week are scored there that they may not be forgotten. But do you ever make any such memoranda with regard to God? Did you ever say to your soul, "My Soul, be fixed and abide hard and fast near to God this week"? Did you ever charge your spirit, saying, "Keep the Lord always before you, and set Him at your right hand"? Whatever you have tried, you have never even made the attemptto think

of God! How, then, do you know that it is difficult work? And if it is difficult, what excuse is it for you when you have not even made the attempt? But, further, you tell me that you cannot--but even if you could not, you are still guilty, for I put it thus to you--Did you ever weep because you had forgotten God?Though you have found it difficult to remember Him, the least thing you could have done would be to have been sorry because you could not do it! Did you ever charge your eyes to weep because you have forgotten Him who gives them light? Did you ever bid your heart dissolve with anguish because it would not cleave to Him who made it beat? Oh no, Sirs, you know that sin is sweet to you, and forgetfulness of God is a dainty morsel to you, and you roll it under your tongue. Oh, were it bitter to you, then indeed, you would soon be cured of it. If once forgetfulness of God became a burden and a plague, then you would seek Divine Grace that you might escape it! But instead, it sits so sweetly upon your shoulders--it is not like a chain of iron but rather like a chain of gold--it is not like a yoke, but like a pleasant burden which you are only too glad to carry! I charge this on you, that you do willfully and wickedly forget the Lord your God; for if it were not willful and wicked, you would repent and be sorry that you had forgotten Him!

Oh Sirs! Vain are your excuses--while in forgetting God you have, indeed, to strain yourselves and divert your attention to do it. If you would but let the world speak to you, it would make you remember Him. There is not a star in the sky which would not look out of Heaven and whisper to you--"Man, remember Him who lives above the skies." There is not a blade of grass in the meadows which would not speak to you and say, "Consider, consider the God who has made you as the grass, and before whom you must soon wither away." Oh, if you would only hear, the very mountains and the hills would break out before you--preaching to

you of their God--and the very trees of the field clapping their hands in adoration! Besides, go to your own house--look into the eyes of your children, sit down at your table--eat your bread and that which God has added thereunto. Go to your bed and dream--wake up and find yourself alive, and see if all these things do not tell you of God! Why, God's name is printed on every part of your habitation; God's name is written on the very streets along which you walk. Does He not fill Heaven and earth, and is He not everywhere? Surely if you forget Him, you are without excuse.

What warningssome of you have had! You have been at sea, and the timbers of the ship have creaked, and she seemed to be as an eggshell in a giant's hand; and then you thought you would never forget God again! When the thunderclap made you deaf for a moment with horror, and the lightning flash seemed to blind you with dismay, you thought, then, that you could never forget God! Remember too, that little room and the fever; think of the street you live on, and the cholera as it stopped at door after door and it passed you by! Think, I pray you, of the many times you have been exposed to instant or sudden death, and say--"has not God spoken to me, not only once but twice?" Has consumption begun its deadly work with you, fair maid? It is God's solemn voice to you--"Prepare to meet your God." Has some disease taken a deep root in your frame, O strong man? Has the physician warned you that it may carry you off and that, right suddenly? Has he said your heart is so diseased, that you may fall dead in the streets? God has spoken to you! Shall the Eternal find you turn a deaf ear? Oh, no, I bid you now, however much you have forgotten Him--forget now all the world besides, and think of Him. Better to have no memory and no thought for the most important things of time, than to give all your attention to this present world of shadows, and to forget the world of substances, and

the God who gives solemnity to them! God bless these, my words, and pluck your excuses away from you, and tear them in pieces before your eyes!

IV. May God now give you a heart to listen while I seek to PERSUADE YOU TO REPENTANCE. This is my closing task.

You who have forgotten God! You are standing self-condemned, and convicted this morning! I have two arguments to ply you with--two great Truths of God which I would force home upon your conscience! But, alas, it is not I who can do it--only God the Holy Spirit can bless the Word.

Well, forgetter of God, I would first plead with you by the terror of the Law of God--"Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Law, we persuade men." You will soon be forced to remember God; you shall lie upon your dying bed, and the thought of a God so long neglected, whose Gospel has been rejected, whose Son has been defied, shall then be as gall unto you! The remembrance which might be sweet to you, now, shall be as gravel in your mouth, then, to break your teeth in sunder! You shall lie upon your bed, and toss from side to side with a pain which medicine cannot cure; you shall know anguish to which even sleep, itself, can give no respite. Many such have I seen, and awful has been the sight--men whom nothing could pacify, whose pain drugs could not allay, whose peace utterly departed--their bodies and souls seemed as if they were torn in pieces by lions; as if they were set on fire of Hell before their time. Nor will you be able to forget Him at the Day of Judgment, when your soul shall come up from the place of its separate existence, when your body shall spring up from the grave, and the two shall be re-united. You will see the Lord, whom you have despised, sitting upon His Throne of Glory, and what would you give if you could shut your eyes, then, or if you had never shut your eyes upon Him before? Then will you say, "Would to God I had now a time of

respite; would that mercy could again be proclaimed to me; that there was still found some minister of Christ, some open Bible, some sanctuary, some space for repentance, some pleading terms, some praying ground on which I might yet stand hopefully before my God!" But, no! All through the time of the preparation of that judgment, the trumpet waxing exceedingly loud and long, shall ring destruction in your ears! The black darkness shall blot out hope from you, and the ever-flashing lightning shall slay your pride and your pretensions! And when the sentence is pronounced--when Christ has discharged the awful volleys of His wrath against you--you will not be able to forget Him then! In Hell the thought of God shall be as a dagger in your soul--a viper nestling in your bosom, poisoning the fountains of your life, and sending hot venom through all your veins. "Son, remember!"That was the cry of Abraham from Heaven, and doubtless an awful cry to Dives in Hell-- "Son, remember!" It is the voice of mercy today! "Son, remember!"--it shall be the voice of judgment tomorrow! Son, remember! Son, remember! Son, remember the invitations neglected! Son, remember the warnings despised! Son, rememberthat solemn Sabbath, when the minister preached--

"As though he never might preach again; A dying man to dying men."

"Son, remember," the open Word of God--remember your mother's prayers--your father's exhortations. Son, rememberyours oaths, your blasphemies, your sins, your follies, your laughing at the Word, your despising of Christ! It will tear your hearts asunder only to look back, with that sounding always in your ears-- "Son remember, Son remember." I bid you then, by the terrors of the Law, to repent of this great sin of having forgotten God! Oh, Spirit of God, grant repentance now! Will you make your bed in Hell; will you abide with everlasting burnings? I pray you be not foolhardy--there are other ways of being a

fool besides damning your soul! Come, dress in motley attire, paint your face and play the clown if you must be a fool, but damn not your soul to prove yourself full of folly! Dash your head against a wall--spend your money for that which is not bread! Hurl your purse into the sea, but don't destroy yourself! Is there no happiness in this world except the happiness of entailing eternal torment? Oh, could I plead with you as my heart longs to do; could I speak to you as my Master would speak if He were here this morning, surely I might reach your hearts! Ah, but unless the sacred Spirit is here, vain are the most earnest entreaties; vain the sternest attacks against the barricades and bulwarks of a hard and iron heart! Oh, Lord, turn the sinner and by the terrors of the Law drive him to Yourself! But now to use perhaps a more forcible argument. God send it home.

By the mercies of God, Sinner, I bid you to forget Him no more! He is not a hard Taskmaster, or an austere God. His own words are, "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." He is stern--justly so. He is severe--He must be so. To be judge of all the earth, He must do right. But this is the day of Divine Grace; this is the time of mercy! You are not shut up in Hell; the gates of the grave have not yet enclosed you; the iron door is not yet fast bolted! There is hope--hope even for the negligent--hope for the despiser of Christ! And let me tell you--that hope lies not in anything that is in you, but in Christ Jesus. "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Whoever seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, it shall be opened." If you shall come to yourself this morning, as the prodigal did in the midst of the swine, and if you shall say--"I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your

son'"--then, Sinner, God will rejoice to see you come to Him! He will have eyes of mercy for you to see you afar off! He will have feet of mercy to run and meet you--He will have arms of mercy to receive you! He will have kisses of mercy to cheer you; He will have depths of mercy to wash you; He will have garments of mercy in which to clothe you--jewels of mercy with which to adorn you--and feasts of mercy and music of mercy to make you glad! If I, today, had made my father angry with me; If I had left his house voluntarily, and spent his substance, I might be afraid to come back to my father's house. "Lo," I might say, "he will never forgive me; I fear he is a stern man." But if a messenger should come from him and say to me, "Young man, your father's heart yearns to press you to his bosom; he does not wish you to be a stranger to him any longer; he bade me tell you to come to him just as you were--rags and ulcers, sores and filth--just as you are." Why, I think I can say that the sight of my father's messenger, especially if it were my own brother, with tears in his eyes saying to me, "Brother, come back; come back, our father loves us still! I was like you once and father received me--come and he will do the same for you." I think I would put my unreluctant hand into his and say, "My Brother, I will go with you to my father's house and I will fall upon my knees, and confess my folly and my fault, and--

"Perhaps he will admit my plea; perhaps he will hear my prayer."

In the name of God our Father I plead with you! As vile as any of you have been, I have been--but I know I am forgiven! I bear Him witness He has blotted out my sins; He will do the same with you. Is there no sinner here who will say, "I'll go with you to Jesus--at His Cross I'll bow, and at my Father's face offer my prayer"?

Two little parables by way of further encouragement, and I have done. There may be one here who says, "Sir, I don't know how to pray; I don't

know how to find my way to Christ, for I have learned the language of sin so well that I cannot speak the language of Grace." Oh, Sinner, if you only know what it is you need, and have a desire to find it, you shall find it! I compare you to a woman whom I met last Friday. We were walking up the lane near where I live, and there was a poor woman who accosted us. She spoke in French. This poor soul had some children at Guildford--she was needing to find her way to them, but did not know a single word of English. She had knocked at the doors of all the gentlemen's houses down the lane, and of course the servants could do nothing for her, for they could not understand a word she said. So she went from one place to another, and at last she did not know what would become of her. She had some 30 miles to walk--she did not mind that--but then, she did not know which way to go! So I suppose she had made up her mind she would ask everybody. All she knew, she had written on a piece of paper--the word, "Guildford." And she held it up and began to ask in French on the road; she had met with someone who could tell her the path, and beautifully did she express her distress. She said she felt like a poor little bird who was hunted about, and did not know how to find her way to the nest. She poured a thousand blessings on us when we told her the way! And I thought--how much this is like the sinner when he needs to find the way to Heaven. All he knows is, he needs Christ! That is all he knows--but where to get to Him, and how to find Him--he does not know. And he knocks at one door, and then at another door; and perhaps the minister at the place of worship does not understand the language of human sympathy. He cannot understand the sinner's need, for there are many servants in my Master's house, I am sorry to say, who do not understand the language of a sinner's cry. Oh, Sinner, you shall surely find Christ, though you know not how to find Him. He will say to you, "Whom do you seek?" And you will say, "I seek

Jesus." And He will say--"I that speak unto you am He." I am much mistaken this morning, if He who speaks in your heart is not the very Jesus whom you seek! His speaking in your heart is a token of His love. Trust Him, believe in Him, and you shall be saved!

There is a story told concerning Thomas a'Becket--a story connected with his parentage. His father was a Saxon gentleman, who went into the Crusades, and was taken prisoner by the Saracens. While a prisoner among the Saracens, a Turkish lady loved him, and when he was set free and returned to England, she took an opportunity of escaping from her father's house--took ship and came to England. But she knew not where to find him she loved; all she knew about him was that his name was Gilbert. She determined to go through all the streets of England, crying out the name of Gilbert, till she had found him. She came to London, first, and passing every street, persons were surprised to see an Eastern maiden, attired in her Eastern costume, crying, "Gilbert, Gilbert, Gilbert!" And so she passed from town to town, till one day as she pronounced the name, the ear for which it was intended caught the sound. and they became happy and blessed!

And so, Sinner, today you know little, perhaps, of religion, but you know the name of Jesus. Take up the cry and go today, and as you go along the streets, say in your heart, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" When you are in your chamber say it still, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" Continue your cry and it shall reach the ear for which it is meant! If your relations laugh, say, "Ah, I did not call for you." If your friends say that you are mad, reply, "Ah, it may seem so; the riddle is always foolish till you know the meaning of it." But if you should cry, "Jesus," till Jesus shall answer you, oh happy shall it be! There shall be a marriage between Him and your soul, and you, with Him, shall sit down at the marriage supper in the Glory of the Father and dwell with Him forever

and ever! God add His own blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 56

Self-Sufficiency Slain

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"Without Me you cam do nothing." John 15:5.

CONSCIOUS of this Truth of God in my own case, I would earnestly seek the help of God's Spirit in preaching as in every other spiritual exercise, for, without Him, I can do nothing! It is a remarkable fact that all the heresies which have arisen in the Christian Church have had a decided tendency to dishonor God, and to flatter man. They have always had for their covert, if not for their open aim, the exaltation of human nature, and the casting down of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace. Robbing God of the Glory which is due unto His name, these false prophets would shed a counterfeit luster upon the head of the rebellious and depraved creature! On the other hand, the Doctrines of the Gospel, commonly known as the Doctrines of Grace, are distinguished for this peculiarity above every other, namely, that they sink the creature very low, and present the Lord Jehovah before us as sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up! So true is this, that the most uneducated Christian may, even if he is incapable of refuting an erroneous discourse, always be able to discover its untruthfulness, if it glorifies man at the expense of God. The merest babe in Grace may carry this test with him--in the midst of the diversities of opinion with which he is surrounded, he may always judge, and judge infallibly, too, of the truth or falsehood of a doctrine by testing it thus--"Does it glorify God?"If it is so, it is true! "Does it exalt man?" Then it must be false! On the other hand, does it lay man very low and speak of him in terms which tend to make him feel his degradation? Then

doubtless it is full of the Truth of God! And does it put the crown upon the head of God, and not upon the head of man's free will, or free agency, or good works? Then assuredly it is a doctrine according to godliness, for it is the very Truth of the Lord our God! My text--the very words of Christ, contains in it a Doctrine which belongs to the class of those which speak against the vaunting of humanity, casting down its high hopes--and scorning its proud looks; and to the same degree this sentence honors Christ and lifts Him up in the estimation of all His people.

This morning I shall speak of my text thus--Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing." First, this is true of His saints in matters relating to themselves. Secondly, this is even more manifestly true of unconverted and unregenerate men. Thirdly it will be found by experience to be equally a fact if we look at saints in relation to sinners--without Christ the most earnest saint can do nothing whatever for the conversion of the sinner!

I. To begin, then, with THE SAINT IN RELATION TO HIMSELF. Jesus said to the Apostles and if to them, certainly as strongly, if not more so, to us, "Without Me you can do nothing." Let us explain this. Then try to support it. And then draw the practical lessons from it.

1. Child of God--Jesus Christ speaks to you personally this morning, and He says to you, "Without Me you can do nothing." Do you understand this? Mark how decisively it speaks! I borrow from Augustine much of the exposition which follows. He observes that this sentence seems to have been written to put an end to the impudent impostures of the Pelagians, for the text does not say, "Without Me you can hardly do anything;it will be with extreme difficulty that you will be able to accomplish a good work or to achieve a holy purpose." No, it lays the axe far more decisively to the root! It says, "Without Me you can do

nothing"--absolutely, positively nothing at all! What? Even if I seek and strive; if I bring all my energies to a single point--concentrate all my faculties to the purpose--can I not, then, do it? If I am extremely watchful; if I am intensely earnest; if I am sincerely prayerful--can I not then accomplish something, even if the Spirit's influence is withheld? It may be it shall cost me much difficulty; it may be hard rowing against the stream; but may I not, with my own unaided power, if I strain it to the utmost--may I not speed at least a little in the things of God? "No," says the Lord Jesus, "No. Without Me you can do nothing." Strive as you might--struggle as you might-- your striving and your struggling would be misapplied strength! They would not speed you towards the goal--they would but sink you deeper into the mire of desperation or of presumption. Mark, further, the text does not say,

"Without Me you can not do somegreat things--some special acts of piety, some high and supernatural deeds of daring--of self-denial and self-sacrifice." No, "Without Me you can do nothing."" Including in the sentence, as you will clearly perceive, those little acts of Divine Grace--those little deeds of piety--for which, perhaps, in our proud self-conceit, we think ourselves to be already sufficiently equipped. You can do nothing;not only is the higher duty beyond your power, but the lesser duty, too. You are not capable of performing the lowest act of the Divine Life, except as you receive strength from God the Holy Spirit!

And surely, my Brothers and Sisters, it is generally in these little things that we find out most of all our weaknesses! Peter can walk the waves of the sea, but he cannot bear the jest of a little maid! Job can endure the loss of all things, but the upbraiding words of his false friends, though they are but words, and break no bones--make him speak

far more bitterly than all the sore boils, and pains which were in his very skin! Jonah said he did well to be angry, even unto death, about a gourd! Have you not often heard that mighty men who have outlived hundreds of battles have been slain at last by the most trivial accident? And has it not been so with professed Christians? They stood uprightly in the midst of the greatest trials--they have outlived the most arduous struggles, and yet, in an evil hour, trusting to themselves, their foot has slipped under some slight temptation, or because of some small difficulty! John Newton said--"The Grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in Christians on the breaking of a china plate, as on the death of an only son." These little leaks need the most careful stopping; the plague of flies is no more easy to be stayed than that of the destroying angel! In little, as well as in great things, the just must live by faith. In trifles as well as in nobler exercises, the Believer should be conscious of his own inability--should never say of any act, "Now I am strong enough to perform this; I need not go to God in prayer about this! This is so little a thing, it is beneath the dignity of God, and I am quite sufficient for it of myself." No, Believer, you are sufficient for nothing at all! Without Christ you can do nothing that is good; nothing that is right! "We have not sufficiency of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "We know not what to pray for as we ought." "We do feel each day that to will is present with us, but how to perform that which we would, we find not." Our strength is not only weakness, but perfect weakness--weakness even for little things--weakness for ounces as truly as for tons; weakness in drops of grief as well as of seas of sorrow; weakness for splinters of trial as well as for the terrible darts of the Evil One. In everything, Christian, you are powerless apart from the Lord who is your Strength

and your Salvation. Learn, then, the meaning of this text, "Without Me you can do nothing."

In further explaining the meaning of this passage, let me remark that Christ did not say "Without Me you can perfect nothing," but, "Without Me you can donothing." The Pelagian might perhaps admit that the Christian could not complete the good work unaided, but then he might do much towards it. Says he, "If he does not finish, he may begin; if he is not the Omega, he may at least be the Alpha. If he cannot bring out the glorious top stone and crane it up to the sublime height in which it is to stand forever and ever, he may at least dig out the foundations and lay in the first hidden stone." "No," says Christ, "Without Me you can do nothing." As in that last glorious leap when the Believer shall vault from his dying bed into the land of the living, all his strength must be of God--so must it be in that first trembling step when as a penitent he comes to Christ, and rests his soul on Him. Do not say, if you are about to undertake some enterprise, "I will begin this, and then God will give me Grace to make up my deficiencies; but I will trust in myself as far as I can." Ah, you foolish one, your trowel is covered with untempered mortar; you build with wood and hay and stubble! So far from its being yours to do much apart from the Spirit of God, you can do nothing whatever. You can neither lift a finger, nor stir a hand in this spiritual work apart from God! You cannot put on the white robe of Glory-- no, more--you can not unwrap yourself from the clothes of your death! Even this must be done for you, from the beginning to the end.

And yet still further, to put the meaning in a forcible light. There might be some who would say, "Well, while the text may be understood to say the Believer cannot commence any good thing, yet possibly he may, after it is commenced with great assistance of God, the Holy Spirit, in

his own salvation, he may do something apart from the Spirit." Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, when the Spirit of God is with us, we do much; when He is in us, He makes us the instrument of our own deliverance! But let the Spirit of God be taken away from the Christian, albeit that he is renewed, albeit that he has a new heart, and a right spirit, yet would he retain that new heart and right spirit not one single hour, no--not for a tenth of a second--if the Spirit of God were once withdrawn from him! There is no support for the New Life to be found in the natural soil of manhood! Every dew drop with which the sweet flower of Paradise is nourished in our heart had to be brought there from Heaven, for naturally our heart is a rock too barren to yield any subsistence to the plants of Paradise! If in our soul there flows a river of the Water of Life, its rise is in the mountains of God's eternal purpose! The river finds no tributary springs in our heart; flesh can yield no aid to spirit. Unrenewed nature can be a huge impediment to Divine Grace, but assistance it can never be! The Apostle Paul never found the old man a help to the new man. If it had been so, he would not have cried out--"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" He would have shaken hands with that body of death, and thanked it for its assistance if it yielded any; but he felt it was of no more use to him than would a dead, rotten, corrupt, filthy noxious carcass be to a living man if he had it chained side by side with him! When we shall get rid of self, and self's power, then we shall be strong; but all the strength of Nature is but a weakness to Divine Grace, and all the power and energy of the flesh is but an hindrance to the Lord and not a help to Him. Without Him--in the widest sense in which the language can be possibly understood--we can do nothing!

2. And now, having thus sought to explain the text in regard to the

Christian, let me try to support it. I would support it, first of all, by the common consent of all Believers in all ages. With the exception of ancient Pelagians and their modern off-spring, I do not know that the Church has afforded any instance of any professors who have doubted the inability of man apart from God the Holy Spirit. Our confessions of faith are nearly unanimous upon this point. But I hear someone say--"Do not the Arminians believe that there is natural strength in man by which he can do something?" No, my Brothers and Sisters, the true Arminian can believe no such thing! Arminius speaks right well upon this point. I quote his words, as I have them in a translation--"It is impossible for free will, without Grace, to begin or perfect any true or spiritual good. I say, the Grace of Christ, which pertains to regeneration is simply and absolutely necessary for the illumination of the mind, the ordering of the affections, and the inclination of the will to that which is good. It is that which operates on the mind, the affections, and the will, which infuses good thoughts into the mind, inspires good desires into the affections, and leads the will to execute good thoughts and good desires. It goes before, accompanies, and follows; it excites, assists, works in us to will, and works with us that we may not will in vain. It averts temptations, stands by and aids us in temptations, supports us against the flesh, the world, and Satan; and in the conflict, it grants us to enjoy the victory. It raises up again those who are conquered and fallen; it establishes them and endues them with new strength, and renders them more cautious. It begins, promotes, perfects and consummates salvation. I confess that the mind of the natural and carnal man is darkened, his affections are depraved, his will is refractory, and that the man is dead in sin." Richard Watson, who among modern Arminians is considered to be a standard divine, especially in the Wesleyan denomination, is equally

clear upon this point. He fully admits that, "The sin of Adam introduced into his nature such a radical impotence and depravity, that it is impossible for his descendants to make any voluntary effort (of themselves) towards piety and virtue," and then he quotes with warm approval, an expression of Calvin's, in which Calvin says that, "Man is so totally overwhelmed, as with a deluge, that no part is free from sin, and therefore, whatever proceeds from him is accounted sin." It is very satisfactory to have these testimonies to the common Doctrine of the Church. I know that some Arminians are not so sound, even as Arminius or Richard Watson; I know that some of them do not understand any creed at all, not even their own, for in all denominations there are men so ignorant of all theology that they will venture upon any assertion whatever, claiming to be Arminian, or Calvinistic, without knowing what either Calvin or Arminius taught! Arminians would be much better, even if they were as good as Arminius! Much as he swerved from the faith in some respects, he was not one-half as grave a heretic as multitudes of his followers; but in many points would be as stern and unflinching a defender of the faith as John Calvin, himself!

But my dear Friends, instead of dwelling upon this point any longer, let me make one or two other remarks. Suppose for a moment that the Doctrine of our text were not true, and that Christians had power in themselves to do something. Take down your Bibles when you get home, and see what a great many promises of the Word of God would be without any value to you. God never made a promise which was not necessary. Now if I have strength of my own, God certainly will not need to make me a promise of giving His strength to me! But inasmuch as there are scores of promises in which it is written, "Unto him who has no might, He increases strength"--inasmuch as we are often told that, "young men do faint, and are weary, and the youths do utterly fail, but they who wait

upon the Lord shall renew their strength"--I think you see that the very fact of these promises prove that they are needed, and if needed, it must be because man is weak. But again, what should we make of the praises of the saints? Have you not heard them all through Holy Scripture ascribing their strength and their power to God? Did they not all, from the first, even to the last, confess that all their fresh springs were in Him? That He, the Lord Jehovah, was their strength and their song, and had become their salvation? Did they not unanimously confess that their sufficiency was of God, that when they were weak, then were they strong? That in themselves they were nothing? I say, what do you make of these praises? What are they? Are they not mere empty wind, if these men really had in themselves strength and power to do good? And what are the songs before the Throne of God--those eternal cries of, "Salvation be unto our God who sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb"? How can they ascribe power and dominion and might to Him forever and ever, if their power was of themselves? Must there not be a mingled strain? And while they sing the power of Divine Grace, must there not be some interludes in which they will chant the power of Nature, too? If they came to Heaven partly by God, and partly by themselves, must not some of the saved harpers sing to Divine Grace, but others of them vary the strain, at least at intervals, to the praise of him who by his own strength did snap the fetters of his sin, and by his own watchfulness did preserve himself unto eternal life? It is blasphemy to think thus! Oh, no, my Brothers and Sisters, it is because they had no power on earth but that in which God gave to them that they have no song in Heaven except the song which exalts and praises God!

Other arguments, I suppose, are unnecessary, but yet let me mention one other. If it were so, that man had power in himself, what were the need

of the Holy Spirit's office at all? The office of the Holy Spirit becomes at once useless if man can do anything and everything! What need to quicken men by the Spirit, if they can take the first step towards quickening themselves? What need to strengthen us with might according to His Spirit in the inner man, if the inner man is already strong enough in its own natural power? What need that the Spirit should daily teach God's people, if they can instruct themselves? What need that I should pray, "Hold You me up," if I can hold myself up? Prayers for spiritual aid are prayers for mercies that are unneeded if we have strength of our own. I declare that if man has Grace enough to keep himself one single hour from sin, it is not necessary for him to pray at least during that hour! Why should he want more strength than he needs? Should he have it to spend it upon his lusts? If it is possible for me to perform any one holy action apart from the Lord Jesus, then let me at least perform that one action independently of Him. Let me for that time dispense with the Holy Spirit. But you revolt from such an idea! I say your blood would curdle if I should continue to talk thus. "No," you say, "day by day we have need to pray. Hour by hour we have need to trust. 'My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.'" I am compelled to feel each day I can no nothing without Him--my strength is wholly His. The very fact that the offices of the Holy Spirit are needed, by our experience, proves that we can do nothing without Him.

3. Now let us discuss this Doctrine. We see here a reason for the deepest humility. Are you proud, Believer, because you have done some little service to the Church, and to your times? Who makes you to differ, and what have you which you have not received? Have you shed a little light upon the darkness? Ah, who lit your candle? And who is it who keeps you still shining, and prevents you from being extinguished?

Have you overcome temptation? Hang not up your banner--do not decorate your own bosom with the glory, for who made you strong in the battle? Who made your sword sharp and enabled you to strike home? Remember, you have done nothing whatever of yourself; if you are this day a vessel unto honor, decorated and gilded--if now you are a precious vase, filled with the sweetest perfume--remember you did not make yourself so! You are the clay, and He is the Potter. You may be a vessel unto honor, yet not a vessel unto your own honor--you are a vessel unto the honor of Him that made you! If you stand among your fellow men as the angels stand among the fallen spirits--a chosen one, distinguished from them--remember, it was not any goodness in yourselfthat made you to be chosen, nor has it been any of your own efforts, or your own power, which has lifted you out of the miry clay, and set your feet on the Rock and established your goings! Off with the crown from your proud head, and lay down your honors at the feet of Him who gave them to you! Come with cherubim and seraphim, and veil your face and cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name be all the Glory forever and ever." And when you are thus bowed down with humility, be prepared to learn another lesson, namely--never to depend on yourself again. If you have anything to do, go not forth to do it leaning on an arm of flesh! First bow your knees and ask power of Him who makes you strong, and then you shall come back from your labor rejoicing. But if you go in your own strength, you shall break your plowshare on the rock; you shall sow your seed by the side of the salt sea upon the barren sand, and you shall look upon the naked acres in years to come--they shall not yield you so much as a single blade to make your heart glad. "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." But that strength is not available to you as long as you repose in any strength of your own. He will help you if you are but as a worm, but if

you are strong in yourself, He will take away His own power from you and cause you to stumble and fall. And happy shall it be if you stumble not to be broken into pieces! Learn, then, the Divine Grace of depending daily upon God and do this constantly with proper humility. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I would speak very earnestly here before I turn from this point, for this is a common vice with us all--to wish to grow independent. We get a little stock of Grace on hand, and we think we will spend our pocket money before we will go again to our Father's treasury. We have a little faith; our Master honors us with enjoyment of His Presence, and we grow so great that we cry, "My mountain stands firm--I shall never be moved." Ah, there is always a trial near at hand. Do we not make most of our trials through our boasting, and do we not kindle our own furnace with the fuel of our pride? If we were more childlike, resting more simply on the Spirit's power, should we not be more happy? Does not God our Father hide His face, because to see His face too much might make us exalted above measure? Does not that thorn tear our flesh because otherwise we would lie upon the bed of carnal security and sleep all day long? Oh, we might always be on the mountaintop if we had not such dizzy heads and such slippery feet; we might always have our mouths full of sweetness if it were not that we are so weak that we cannot always bear these sweet things, and must have a draught of wormwood that we may be brought back, again, by a bitter tonic into a healthy state of soul. I pray you seek to lie flat on the ground before our God, for every inch we rise higher than that, is an inch too high; not an inch Heavenward, but an inch Hell-bent. Every grain of self-strength we gain is a grain of weakness and every particle of self-reliance is but a new particle of poison infused into our veins! From all reliance upon self and all carnal security, good Lord deliver us!

II. I now turn to the second part of the discourse, upon which I shall dwell briefly but earnestly. "Without Me you can do nothing." If this is true of the saint, we affirm that it is equally, if not even more forcibly true of THE SINNER.

Instead of making a distinction here, as I have done under the first head, let me at once speak to the conscience. Sinner, the child of God who has been quickened and renewed, feels that without Christ he can do nothing. How much more must this be true of you, for you are absolutely dead in trespasses and sins! When the branch is in the vine, and has been grafted into the good olive, it can then bring forth no good fruit without the stem. How much less, then, can you hope to do anything, for you are not even grafted in! You belong to the wild olive--how can you bring forth fruit? If when the Christian's face has been made white, he cannot keep it so, how much more shall the Ethiopian--such as you are--change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If when healed of his leprosy, the Believer feels that the leprosy would break out daily were it not for the constant miraculous power of the Good Physician, how much less can you, all over defiled with the leprosy of sin, make yourself clean? Sinner, it is true of you that unless visited by the Holy Spirit, unless united to Christ, you can do nothing. We do not assert that you are physically incapable--you can perform natural acts--you can go to the House of God; you can read God's Word; you can do a thousand things which only need your arms and legs, and eyes. Nor are you even mentally incapable. You can discern between good and evil; you can judge of truth and error, and in choosing the false, and rejecting the true, you are verily guilty. We speak now of your actions spiritually, not morally. Of all spiritual acts, you are as totally incapable as the dead in the graveyards, or as the dried bones after they have passed through the fire. There remains in you no spiritual

life, no spiritual power with which to help yourself. You are utterly ruined, entirely undone! And in yourself you are beyond the reach of all hope, and of all human help. Yet remember, I pray you, that this incapacity of yours is a sinful one. It is not one which is your misfortune, but your sin. You are incapable of righteousness, but you are capable enough of iniquity, and your very incapacity is in itself a deadly and a damning sin. Again--your incapacity does not deliver you from your duty; though you can do nothing, it is equally your duty to do everything which God commands!

Though you cannot pay the debt, for you are utterly bankrupt, it is still your duty to pay it. God has not remitted His Law because you have lost power to obey. No, even the Gospel itself does not take back one of its precepts because you cannot fulfill them in and of yourself! Still does God demand of you that you should, "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Though you can no more do this than you can fly, still does He demand of you that you turn from sin, and that you believe in the Lord Jesus with all your heart, though you can no more accomplish this than a stone can transform itself into an angel, or silent rocks chant forth the hallelujahs of eternity! Thus, you see, Sinner, in what a state you are. You have a Lord to demand of you, but you have nothing wherewith to pay! You have the same claims upon you as Adam had in the Garden, but you have lost all capacity to fulfill the demand. Oh, Sinner! What a lost thing you are! What a lost thing you are!

But I hear someone say, "Preaching like this will paralyze men's exertions and make them say, 'I can do nothing.'" Ah, my Friends, it is just this which we wish to make them say! We wish to paralyze their exertions; we wish to strike them with a sense of their inability. Do not think I would deny or shrink from the consequences of this Truth of

God upon the sinner's conscience--it is just this I wish to bring him to! The Arminian seeks to bring men to activity. I seek to bring him to no such thing at first, but to a sense of his inability; for when the sinner has come to know his inability, then God the Spirit works in him, and then shall the activity begin! But activity apart from a sense of inabilityis but putting the sinner on a path which seems to lead to Heaven, but which will really lead to Hell! I care not, though it should be said thousands have been converted by a preaching contrary to this; the conversion of most of these has been a fallacy. I have been lately in a district where a most excellent Brother in Christ had worked a very great revival. It was said that nearly every person in the town had been converted, and the town is as drunken, as profane, as blasphemous this day, as it was before! I am persuaded that much of the excitement and fanatical ravings which have disgraced the true revival movement, are no more the work of God, but the work of Satan, himself! I would discern between the precious and the vile. God hasmade bare His arm--multitudes have been converted during the last few years by true revival work--but that excitement which has attended some of these revivals is nothing more than the excitement of the passions of men--making men weep about their parents, but not about their sins--making them cry about their children, but not about their souls--making them tremble for the moment, but not reaching their inmost heart! We shall need to have the Master come again, with a fan in His hand, thoroughly to purge His floor! I may state an unpalatable Truth of God, but the floor is getting heaped with chaff now, and preachers are receiving into Churches men who will need to be cast out again! They may be received with sound of trumpet, but they will have to be thrust out the back door with the noise of weeping, because they were not savingly converted to God. I feel in my own conscience that I were not clear of

man's blood unless I did declare that any conversion which does not bear in it a consciousness of man's total loss and ruin--any conversion which does not teach man the fact that he can do nothing--is a conversion from which he needs to be converted, and a repentance which needs to be repented of.

Still, I hear another say, "It must be an ill thing to bring men to feel that they can do nothing." It is no ill thing! I would to God that every sinner felt it in his own soul. "But," says one, "I knew a man who used to say he could do nothing, therefore, he would not try." My Friend, what that man said is one thing; what he felt was another. I venture to affirm that that man did not believe what he said, or he would not have added the last sentence. He thought in his own heart that he could believe, and could repent, and could be saved when he liked. He still treasured up in his soul the fallacy that one of these fine days, when he had a more convenient season, he would come to Christ! That was his inmost thought. What he said was but a mere pretense to screen his conscience from your rebuke. Why, men and women, if you could be made to feel that you were so lost, so ruined, that you could do nothing, it would fill you with trembling and with self-despair, and then you would cry out in the midst of your horror, "Lord save me, or I perish." "God be merciful to me, a sinner." I say again, it is because you do not feel it, but only say you do, and you therefore make your saying it an excuse for a need of feeling it. I pray God the Spirit strike you now with a sense of powerlessness, that at once you may fall flat on your face, and feel in your inmost heart that your salvation lies in Christ's hands and not in your own! And that if you are saved, it must be the work of Divine Grace in you, and of Divine Grace for you; it cannot be your own work since you have no power to do it, in and of yourself!

If I could only bring you there! Oh, my God, bring the sinner there! I pray You, bring him there! If you are come there already, poor Sinner, God has begun a good work in you. I tell you, if you are come to know this Truth of God really in your very heart, God the Spirit has begun to save you, and the work of His own hands, He will never leave. Do not misunderstand me! If you merely say, "I can do nothing--(any man can say that)--that is not the Spirit's work! But if you feel you can do nothing, then that is the Spirit's work! Is not this Doctrine very unpalatable? There are many of my hearers who do not like it; perhaps they will go away and say, "This is a hard saying--who can bear it?" I do not expect the natural man to receive a spiritual Truth of God! If you have received it, I thank God for it. He who strips you will clothe you; He who has killed you this morning will quicken you; He who has made you feel that you can do nothing will give you strength to do all things. If you could see the bottom of your own treasury, that there is not a farthing left in it--if you could feel your own emptiness--I am sure you would soon see Christ's fullness, and would discover that He is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. Remember, though we can do nothing, He can do all things--though we can neither begin nor end--"He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Author and the Finisher of our faith."

III. I now close with the third head, "Without Me you can do nothing." This is true of THE SAINT ON THE SINNER'S ACCOUNT.

Brothers and Sisters, I sometimes hear of men called Revivalists, and I suppose it is imagined that there is some power in them or about them to create a revival. I would be sorry to wear the title lest I should be thought to arrogate any power to myself. I know, too, that people sometimes plan to have a revival at a certain time--as if the Spirit of God were at their disposal--as if they could make the wind, which blows

where it pleases, and when it pleases, come at their beck and at their command! I think all that is beginning at the wrong end! Instead, we ought to hold meetings for prayer, to confess our inability. If we began by feeling we could not do anything, we would do everything; but when we begin by thinking we can do everything, we shall end in doing nothing! The Church of today needs more and more to have this fact driven right into her heart. Church of God, you are powerless! You have no strength, no might to convert a single soul apart from the Spirit of God! Have any of you proved this to be true in your own experience? Perhaps I look upon a father who has many children. He says, "There is one of my sons who completely confounds me. I have prayed for him, I have talked with him, I have sought to instruct him. But I can only go up to my chamber, and on my knees feel that unless God will save him, that boy will never be saved." It is a good thing that you should feel this, for now you will go to work in the right way, using not your owntools, nor your ownpower, but the strength of God! And I, too, may come up into the pulpit feeling I may preach--yes, with the tongues of men and of angels I may preach--not I, alone, but all my Brothers in the ministry--we may all of us preach vehemently, earnestly--but there will be no power whatever in our preaching for the winning of a single soul, apart from that Spirit of God who goes forth with the Word!

We need ministers to always feel that it is not the mere adaptation of the sermon to the salvation of souls, but the application of that sermon to the soul. It is not the mere fact that we are earnest, but the energy of the Spirit going with our earnestness, to quicken the heart, and awaken the conscience! Sunday school teachers, you must pray to understand this; it will not unnerve you, it will not paralyze you--it will make you strong--for when we are weak, then we are strong. You need to feel that you could no more convert a child in your class

than create a world--that you could no more change a heart than make an ocean blaze--or compel the solid granite to mount in watery fountains to the sky! You know that this is in God's hand, not in yours! Yours it is to use the means, but God's to work the result! Go, then, each of you, beloved of your God, to your separate works, casting aside all your own trust, and depending simply, wholly, and entirely upon God!

I do believe there would be much more good done in the world if some of those who try to do good, looked less to their own carnal power to do it. I mean by this, if they had less apparent power, they would have more strength. There is a story told by Toplady of a Doctor Guyse, a very learned man. He was in the habit of preparing his sermons very carefully, and he used to read them very accurately. He did so for years, but there was never known to be a sinner saved under him--never such a wonder! The poor good man--for he was an earnest man and wished to do good--was one day at prayer in the pulpit, praying to God that He would make him a useful minister. When he had finished his prayer, he was stone blind! He had sufficient self-possession to preach the sermon extemporaneously, which he had prepared with notes. People did not notice his blindness, but they never heard the doctor preach such a sermon as that before! There was deep attention; there were souls saved! He found his way from the pulpit and began to express his deep sorrow that he had lost his eyesight, when some good old woman who was present, said, perhaps a little unkindly, but still very truthfully--"Doctor, we have never heard you preach like this before, and if that is the result of your being blind, it is a pity you were not blind 20 years ago, for you have done more good today than you have done in 20 years."

So I do not know whether it would not be a good thing if some of our fine sermon readers were struck blind. If they were compelled to be

less elaborate in the preparation of their sermons; to lose some half-dozen hard words, which they always write down as soon as they meet with them, and use them as stones in the middle of the sermon; if, when they came up into the pulpit, though condemned by critics as speaking vulgar language, they might talk of commonplace things such as poor people could appreciate--if they would only do this, God being with them, the absence of their mental power would be the means of more spiritual power, and we would have reason to thank God--that the man had become less--and that God did shine out with greater resplendence! For what are many learned men, after all, but stained glass windows to keep out the light? Oh that we had more men who were as the plain glass of the poor man's cottage, to let the Light of God shine through them!

Let the Church feel that her power is not mentalpower, but spiritualpower! "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." She might then use all her learning, all her education, and all her eloquence. She would use them well, too, if she did but feel that these were but her weapons in the hand of Godfor the pulling down of strongholds.

May God add His blessing for Jesus Christ's sake.

All-Sufficiency Magnified

DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13.

THE former part of the sentence would be a piece of impudent daring without the latter part to interpret it. There have been some men who, puffed up with vanity, have in their hearts said, "I can do all things." Their destruction has been sure and near at hand! Nebuchadnezzar walks through the midst of the great city; he sees its stupendous tower threading the clouds; he marks the majestic and colossal size of every building, and he says in his heart, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built. I can do all things." A few hours, and he can do nothing except that in which the beast excels him; he eats grass like the oxen until his hair has grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. See, too, the Persian potentate. He leads a million men against Greece; he wields a power which he believes to be omnipotent; he lashes the sea, casts chains upon the waves, and bids it be his slave! Ah, foolish pantomime--"I can do all things!" His hosts melt away, the bravery of Greece is too much for him--he returns to his country in dishonor! Or, if you will take a modern instance of a man who was born to rule and govern, and found his way upwards from the lowest ranks to the highest point of empire, call to mind Napoleon! He stands like a rock in the midst of angry billows; the nations dash against him, and break themselves. He, himself, puts out the sun of Austria, and bids the star of Prussia set. He dares to proclaim war against all the nations of the earth, and believes that

he, himself, shall be a very Briarius with a hundred hands attacking a hundred antagonists at once! "I can do all things," he might have written upon his banners. It was the very note which his eagles screamed amid the battle. He marches to Russia, he defies the elements; he marches across the snow, and sees the palace of an ancient monarch in flames. No doubt, as he looks at the blazing Kremlin, he thinks, "I can do all things." But you shall come back to your country alone; you shall strew the frozen plains with men; you shall be utterly wasted, and destroyed! Inasmuch as you have said, "I propose and dispose, too," let Jehovah disposes of you, and take you from your seat, seeing you have arrogated to yourself omnipotence among men!

And what shall we say to our Apostle, little in stature, stammering in speech, his personal presence weak, and his speech contemptible--when he comes forward and boasts, "I can do all things"? O impudent presumption! What can you do, Paul? The leader of a hated sect, all of them doomed by an imperial edict to death! You, you, who dare to teach the absurd dogma that a crucified Man is able to save souls; that He is actually King in Heaven, and virtually King on earth! You say, "I can do all things." What? Has Gamaliel taught you such an art of eloquence, that you can baffle all that oppose you? What? Have your sufferings given you so stern a courage, that you are not to be turned away from the opinions which you have so tenaciously held? Is it in yourself you rely? No! "I can do all things," he says, "through Christ who strengthens me." Looking boldly around him, he turns the eyes of his faith humbly towards his God and Savior, Jesus Christ, and dares to say, not impiously, nor arrogantly, yet with devout reverence and dauntless courage, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

My Brothers and Sisters, when Paul said these words, he meant them.

Indeed, he had to a great measure already proved the strength of which he now asserts the promise! Have you ever thought how varied were the trials, and how innumerable the achievements of the Apostle Paul? Called by Grace in a sudden and miraculous manner, immediately-- not consulting with flesh and blood--he essays to preach the Gospel he has newly received! Then he retires a little while, that he may more fully understand the Word of God. From the desert of Arabia, where he has girded his loins, and strengthened himself by meditation and personal mortification, he comes out. Not taking counsel with the Apostles, nor asking their guidance or their approbation, but at once, with singular courage, proclaiming the name of Jesus, and proclaiming that he, himself, also is an Apostle of Christ! You will remember that after this, he undertook many difficult things--he withstood Peter to his face--no easy task with a man so bold and so excellent as Peter was, but Peter might be a timeserver--Paul never! Paul rebukes Peter, even to his face. And then mark his own achievements, as he describes them himself, "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure." "In prisons more frequent, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in marches often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the Churches." Ah, bravely spoken, Beloved Paul! Yours was no empty boast. You have, indeed, in your life, preached a sermon upon the text, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

And now, my dear Friends, looking up to Christ who strengthens me, I shall endeavor to speak of my text under three heads. First, the measure of it; secondly, the manner ofit/and thirdly, the message of it

I. As for THE MEASURE OF IT. It is exceeding broad; for it says, "I can do all things." We cannot, of course, mention "all things," this morning; for the subject is illimitable in its extent. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

But let us notice that Paul here meant that he could endure all trials. It matters not what suffering his persecutors might put upon him, he felt that he was quite able, through Divine Grace, to bear it; and no doubt though Paul had seen the inside of almost every Roman prison, yet he had never been known to quake in any one of them; though he understood well the devices which Nero had invented to put torment upon Christians--he had heard, in his cell, no doubt, of those who were smeared with pitch and set on fire in Nero's gardens to light his festivities; though he had heard of Nero's racks and chains, and hot pincers, yet Paul felt persuaded that rack and pincers, and boiling pitch, would not be strong enough to break his faith. "I can endure all things," he says, "for Christ's sake." He daily expected that he might be led out to die, and the daily expectation of death is more bitter than death, itself, for what is death? It is but a pang, and it is over! But the daily expectation of it is fearful; if a man fears death, he feels a thousand deaths in fearing one; but Paul could say, "I die daily," and yet he was still steadfast and immovable in the hourly expectation of a painful departure! He was ready to be offered up, and made a sacrifice for his Master's cause. Every child of God, by faith, may say, "I can suffer all things." What, though today we are afraid of a little pain; though perhaps the slightest shooting pang alarms us--yet I do not doubt, if days of martyrdom should return--the martyr

spirit would return with martyrs' trials! And if once more, Smithfield's fires needed victims, there would be innumerable victims found--holocausts of martyrs would be offered up before the shrine of the Truth of God--let us be of good courage under any temptation or suffering we may be called to bear for Christ's sake, for we can suffer it all through Christ who strengthens us.

Then Paul also meant that he could perform all duties. Was he called to preach? He was sufficient for it, through the strength of Christ; was he called to rule and govern in the Churches--to be, as it were, a traveling overseer, and bishop of the flock? He felt that he was well qualified for any duty which might be laid upon him, because of the strength which Christ would surely give. And you, too, my dear Brother, if you are called this day to some duty which is new to you, be not behind the Apostle, but say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I have seen the good man disappointed in his best hopes; because he has not won the battle in the first charge, he lays down his arms saying, "I feel that I can do no good in this world. I have tried, but defeat awaits me. Perhaps it were better that I should be still and do no more." I have seen the same man, too, for a while lie down and faint, "Because," he said, "I have sown much, but I have reaped little; I have strewed the seed by handfuls, but I have gathered only here and there an ear of precious grain." O be not a coward--play the man! Christ puts His hand upon your loins today, and He says, "Up and be doing." And do you reply, "Yes, Lord, I will be doing, for I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I am persuaded there is no work to which a Christian can be called for which he will not be found well qualified. If his Master should appoint him to a throne, he would rule well, or should He bid him play the menial part, he would make the best of servants--in all places and in all duties the

Christian is always strong enough, if the Lord his God is with him! Without Christ he can do nothing, but with Christ he can do all things! This is also true of the Christian's inward struggles with his corruptions. Paul, I know, once said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But Paul did not stay there--his music was not all in a minor key! Right quickly he mounts the higher chords and sings, "But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I may be addressing some Christians who have naturally a very violent temper, and you say you cannot curb it. "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you." I may be speaking to another who has felt a peculiar weakness of disposition, a proneness to be timid and yielding. My Brother, my Sister, you shall not disown your Lord, for through Christ who strengthens you, the dove can play the eagle, and you who are timid as a lamb can be mighty and courageous as a lion! There is no weakness or evil propensity which the Christian cannot overcome. Do not come to me and say, "I have strived to overcome my natural slothfulness, but I have not been able to do it." I do declare, Brother, Sister, that if Christ has strengthened you, you can do it! I don't believe there exists anywhere under Heaven a more lazy man than myself naturally. I would scarcely stir if I had my will, but if there is a man under Heaven who works more than I do, I wish him well through his labors! I have to struggle with my sloth, but through Christ, who strengthens me, I overcome it! Do not say you have a physical incapacity for strong effort; my Brothers and Sisters, you have not--you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you! A brave heart can master even a sluggish life. Often do I find Brethren who say, "I hope I am not too timid or too rash in my temper, or that I am not idle; but I find myself inconstant, I cannot persevere in anything." My dear Brothers

and Sisters, you can! You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Do not sit down and excuse yourself by saying, "Another man can do this, but I cannot. The fact is, I was made with this fault--it was in the original mold--and it cannot be gotten rid of. I must make the best I can of it." You can get rid of it, Brother, there is not a Hittite or a Jebusite in all Canaan that you cannot drive out! You can do nothing of yourself, but Christ being with you, you can make their high walls fall flat even as the walls of Jericho! You can go upon the tottering walls, and slay the sons of Anak, and although they are strong men, who like the giants had six toes on each foot and six fingers on each hand, you shall be more than a match for them all! There is no corruption, no evil propensity, no failing that you cannot overcome, through Christ who strengthens you! And there is no temptation to sin from without which you cannot also overcome through Christ who strengthens you!

Sitting one day this week with a poor aged woman who was sick, she remarked that oftentimes she was tempted by Satan. "And sometimes," she said, "I am a little afraid, but I do not let other people know, lest they should think that Christ's disciples are not a match for Satan. Why, Sir," she said, "he is a chained enemy, is he not? He cannot come one link nearer to me than Christ lets him; and even when he roars ever so loudly I am not afraid with any great fear of him, for I know it is only roaring--he cannot devour the people of God." Now, whenever Satan comes to you with a temptation, or when your companions, or your business, or your circumstances suggest a sin, you are not timidly to say, "I must yield to this; I am not strong enough to stand against this temptation." You are not in yourself, understand that; I do not deny your own personal weakness; but through Christ, who strengthens you, you are strong enough for all the temptations that may possibly

come upon you! You may play the Joseph against lust; you need not play the David--you may stand steadfast against sin! You need not to be overtaken like Noah--you need not be thrown down to your shame, like Lot--you maybe kept by God, and you shallbe. Only lay hold on that Divine strength, and if the world, the flesh, and the devil should beleaguer and besiege you day after day, you shall stand not only a siege as long as the siege of old Troy, but 70 years of siege shall you be able to stand, and at last to drive your enemies away in confusion, and make yourselves rich upon their spoils. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Though I despair of explaining the measure of my text, so as to classify even the tenth part of, "all," let me make one further attempt. I have no doubt that the Apostle especially meant that he found himself able to serve God in every state. "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound--everywhere and in all things I am instructed to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Some Christians are called to sudden changes, and I have marked many of them who have been ruined by their changes. I have seen the poor man exceedingly spiritual-minded; I have seen him full of faith with regard to Divine Providence, and living a happy life upon the bounty of his God, though he had but little. I have seen that man acquire wealth and I have marked that he was more stingy; that he was, in fact, more straitened than he was before! He had less trust in God, less liberality of soul. While he was a poor man, he was a prince in a peasant's garb; when he became rich, he was poor in a bad sense--mean in heart with means in hand. But this need not be! Christ strengthening him, a Christian is ready for all places. If my Master were to call me this day from addressing this assembly to sweep a street-crossing, I know not that I should feel very contented with my lot for a while; but

I do not doubt that I could do it through Christ who strengthens me! And you, who may have to follow some very humble occupation, you have had Divine Grace enough to follow it, and to be happy in it, and to honor Christ in it! I tell you, if you were called to be a king, you might seek the strength of Christ, and say in this position, too, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." You ought to have no choice as to what you shall be. The day when you gave yourself up to Christ, you gave yourself up wholly to Him; to be His soldier, and soldiers must not be choosers. If they are called to lie in the trenches; if they are bid to advance under a galling fire, they must do it. And so must you, feeling that whether He bids you do one thing or another in all states and in all circles, you can do what God will have you do, for through Him you can do all things!

To conclude upon this point, let me remind you that you can do all things with respect to all worlds. You are here in this world, and can do all things in respect to this world. You can enlighten it; you can play the Jonah in the midst of this modern Nineveh; your own single voice may be the means of creating a spiritual revival! You can do all things for your fellow men; you may be the means of uplifting the most degraded to the highest point of spiritual life; you can doubtless, by resisting temptation, by casting down high looks, by defying wrath, by enduring sufferings--walk through this world as a greater than Alexander, looking upon it all as being yours--for your Lord is the Monarch of it. "You can do all things." Then may you look beyond this world into the world of spirits. You may see the dark gate of death. You may behold that iron gate and hear it creaking on its awful hinge; but you may say, "I can pass through that; Jesus can meet me; He can strengthen me, and my soul shall stretch her wings in haste, fly fearless through death's iron gate, nor fear the terror as she passes

through! I can go into the world of spirits, Christ being with me, and never fear." And then look beneath you. There is Hell, with all its demons, your sworn enemy. They have leagued and banded together for your destruction. Walk through their ranks and as they bite their iron bonds in agony and despair, say to them as you look in their face, "I can do all things." And if loosed for a moment, if Diabolus should meet you in the field, and Apollyon should stride across the way and say, "I swear by my infernal den that you shall come no further; here will I spill your soul"--up at him! Strike him right and left, with this for your battle cry, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," and in a little while he will spread his dragon wings and fly away! Then mount up to Heaven; from the lowest deeps of Hell ascend to Heaven! Bow your knees before the eternal Throne; you have a message; you have desires to express, and needs to be fulfilled, and as you bend your knees, say, "O God, in prayer I can prevail with You; let me wonder to tell it; I can overcome Heaven itself by humble, faithful prayer." So you see, in all worlds--this world of flesh and blood, and the world of spirits in Heaven and earth and Hell--everywhere, the Believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

II. Thus have I discussed the first part of our subject--the measure--I shall now talk for awhile upon THE MANNER.

How is it that Christ strengthens His people? None of us can explain the mysterious operations of the Holy Spirit; we can only explain one effect by another. I do not pretend to be able to show how Christ communicates strength to His people by the mysterious in-flowing of the Spirit's energy; let me rather show what the Spirit does, and how these acts of the Spirit, which He works for Christ, tend to strengthen the soul for "all things."

There is no doubt whatever that Jesus Christ makes His people strong by strengthening their faith. It is remarkable that very many poor, timid, and doubting Christians during the time of Queen Mary's persecution were afraid, when they were arrested, that they would never bear the fire. But a singular circumstance is that these generally behaved the most bravely, and played the man in the midst of the fire with the most notable constancy. It seems that God gives faith equal to the emergency, and weak faith can suddenly sprout and swell, and grow, till it comes to be great faith under the pressure of a great trial! Oh, there is nothing that braces a man's nerves like the cold winter's blast; and so, doubtless, the very effect of persecution through the agency of the Spirit going with it, is to make the feeble strong! Together with this faith, it often happens that the Holy Spirit also gives a singular firmness of mind--I might almost call it a celestial obstinacy of spirit. Let me remind you of some of the sayings of the martyrs, which I have jotted down in my readings. When John Ardley was brought before Bishop Bonner, Bonner taunted him, saying, "You will not be able to bear the fire; that will convert you! The fire wood will be sharp preachers to you." Said Ardley, "I am not afraid to try it, and I tell you, Bishop, if I had as many lives as I have hairs on my head, I would give them all up sooner than I would give up Christ." That same wicked wretch held the hand of poor John Tomkins over a candle, finger by finger, saying to him, "I'll give you a taste of the fire before you shall go there," and as the fingers cracked and spurted forth, Tomkins smiled and even laughed in his tormentor's face, being ready to suffer as much in every member as his fingers then endured! Jerome tells the story of a poor Christian woman, who being on the rack, cried out to her tormentors as they straitened the rack, and pulled her bones asunder, "Do your worst; for I would sooner die than lie." It was

bravely said--short, pithy words--but what a glorious utterance! What a comment! What a thrilling argument to prove our text! Verily, Christians can do all things through Christ who strengthens them! And not only does he thus give a sort of sacred tenacity, and obstinacy of spirit combined with faith, but often Christians anticipate the joys of Heaven just when their pangs are greatest. Look at old Ignatius. He is brought into the Roman circus, and after facing the taunts of the emperor and the jeers of the multitude, the lions are let loose upon him, and he thrusts his arm into a lion's mouth, poor aged man as he is, and when the bones were cracking, he said, "Now I begin to be a Christian!" Begin to be a Christian--as if he had never come near to his Master till the time when he came to die! And there was Gordus, a, martyr of Christ, who said when they were putting him to death, "I pray you do not spare any torments, for it will be a loss to me hereafter if you do; therefore inflict as many as you can." What but the singular joy of God poured down from Heaven--what but some singular vials of intense bliss could have made these men almost sport with their anguish? It was remarked by early Christians in England, that when persecution broke out in Luther's days, John and Henry, two Augustine monks--the first who were put to death for Christ in Germany--died singing. And Mr. Rogers, the first put to death in England for Christ, died singing, too--as if the noble army of martyrs marched to battle with music in advance! Why, who would charge in battle with groans and cries? Do not they always sound the clarion as they rush to battle, "Sound the trumpet, and beat the drums, now the conquering hero comes"-- indeed--comes face to face with death, face to face with pain, and surely they who lead the van in the midst of such heroes should sing as they come to the fires! When good John Bradford, our London martyr, was told by his keeper, that he was to be burned on the morrow,

he took off his cap and said, "I heartily thank my God." And when John Noyes, another martyr, was just about to be burned, he took up a piece of fire wood, and kissed it and said, "Blessed be God that He has thought me worthy of such high honor as this." And it is said of Rowland Taylor, that when he came to the fire, he actually, as I think Fox says in his Monuments, "fetched a frisk," by which he means, he began to dance when he came to the flames, at the prospect of the high honor of suffering for Christ!

But in order to enable His people to do all things, Christ also quickens the mental faculties. It is astonishing what power the Holy Spirit can bestow upon the mind of men! You will have remarked, I do not doubt, in the controversies which the ancient confessors of the faith have had with heretics, and persecuting kings and bishops, the singular way in which poor illiterate persons have been able to refute their opponents. Jane Bouchier, our glorious Baptist martyr, the maid of Kent, when she was brought before Cranmer and Ridley, was able to nonplus them entirely. Of course we believe part of her power lay in the goodness of the subject, for if there is a possibility of proving infant Baptism by any text in the Bible, I am sure I am not aware of the existence of it! Popish tradition might confirm the innovation, but the Bible knows no more of it than the Baptism of bells, and the consecration of horses! But, however, she answered them all with a singular power--far beyond what could have been expected of a countrywoman. It was a singular instance of God's Providential judgment that Cranmer and Ridley, two bishops of the Church who condemned this Baptist to die--that she said when they signed the death-warrant, that burning was an easy death, and they had themselves to try it in later days. She said, "I am as true a servant of Christ as any of you, and if you put your poor sister to death, take care, lest God should let loose

the wolf of Rome on you, and you have to suffer for God, too." How the faculties were quickened to make each confessor seize every opportunity to avail himself of every mistake of his opponent, and to lay hold of texts of Scripture which were as swords to cut in pieces those who dared to oppose them, is really a matter for admiration!

Added to this, no doubt, also, much of the power to do all things lies in the fact that the Spirit of God enables the Christian to overcome himself. He can lose all things because he is already prepared to do it; he can suffer all things, because he does not value his body as the worldling does; he can be brave for Christ because he has learned to fear God, and, therefore, has no reason to fear man. A healthy body can endure much more fatigue, and can work much more powerfully than a sick body. Now, Christ puts the man into a healthy state, and he is prepared for long injuries, for hard duties, and for stern privations. Put a certain number of men in a shipwreck; the weak and feeble shall die--those who are strong and healthy--who have not by voluptuousness become delicate, shall brave the cold, and rigors of the elements, and shall live. So with the quickened, yet feeble, professor; he shall soon give way under trial; but the mature

Christian, the strong temperate man, can endure fatigues, can perform wonders, can achieve prodigies--because his body is well-disciplined, and he has not permitted its humors to overcome the powers of the soul.

But observe that our text does not say, "I can do all things through Christ, which has strengthened'me." It is not past, but present strength that we need. Some think that because they were converted 50 years ago, they can do without daily supplies of Divine Grace. Now the manna that was eaten by the Israelites when they came out of Egypt had to be renewed every day, or else they would starve. So it is not your old experiences, but your dailyexperiences; not your old drinking at

the well of life, but your dailyrefreshing from the Presence of God that can make you strong to do all things.

III. But I come now to the third part of my discourse, which is THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Three distinct forms of the message--first, a message of encouragement to those of you who are doing something for Christ, but who begin to feel painfully your own inability. Cease not from God's work, because you are unable to perform it of yourself. Let it teach you to cease from yourself, but not from your work! "Cease you from man whose breath is in his nostrils," but cease not to serve your God; rather in Christ's strength, do it with greater vigor than before. Remember Zerubbabel. A difficulty is in his path, like a great mountain, but he cries, "Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain." If we did but believe ourselves great things, we should do great things. Our age is the age of littleness, because there is always a clamor to put down any gigantic idea. Everyone praises the man who has taken up the idea, and carried it out successfully; but at the first, he has none to stand by him. All the achievements in the world, both political and religious, at any time, have been begun by men who thought themselves called to perform them, and believed it possible that they could be accomplished. A parliament of wiseacres would sit upon any new idea--sit upon it, indeed--yes, until they had utterly destroyed it! They would sit as a coroner's inquest, and if it were not dead, they would at least put it to death while they were deliberating. The man who shall ever do anything is the man who says, "This is a right thing; I am called to do it; I will do it. Now, then, stand up all of you--my friends or my foes, whichever you will--it is all the same; I have God to help me, and it must and shall be done." Such are

the men who write their records in the annals of posterity; such the men justly called great, and they are only great because they believed they could be great--believed that the exploits could be done! Applying this to spiritual things, only believe, young man, that God can make something of you; be resolved that you will do something for Christ, and you will do it! But do not go driveling through this world, saying, "I was born little." Of course you were, but were you meant to be little, and with the little feebleness of a child all your days do little or nothing? Think so and you will be little as long as you live and, you will die little and never achieve anything great. Just send up a thought of aspiration, oh, you of little faith.! Think of your dignity in Christ--not of the dignity of your manhood--but the dignity of your regeneratedmanhood, and say, "Can I do all things, and yet am I to shrink first at this, then at that, and then at the other?" Be as David, who, when Saul said, "You are not able to fight with this Goliath," replied, "Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them." And he put his stone into the sling, and ran cheerfully and joyously--so Goliath fell and he returned with the bloody dripping head. You know his brothers said at first, "Because of your pride, and the naughtiness of your heart, you came to see the battle." All our elder Brothers and Sisters say that to us if we begin anything; they always say it is the naughtiness of our heart, and our pride. Well, we don't answer them; we bring them Goliath's head, and request them to say whether that is the effect of our pride, and the naughtiness of our heart. We wish to know whether it would not be a blessed naughtiness that should have slain this naughty Philistine! So do you, my dear Brothers and Sisters. If you are called to any work, go straight at it, writing this upon your escutcheon, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me--and

I will do what God has called me to do, whether I am blessed or whether I am left alone."

A second lesson is this--take heed, however, that you get Christ's strength; you can do nothing without that. Spiritually, in the things of Christ, you are not able to accomplish even the meanest thing without Him. Go not forth to your work, therefore, till you have first prayed; that effort which is begun without prayer will end without praise! That battle which commences without holy reliance upon God, shall certainly end in a terrible rout! Many men might be Christian victors, if they had known how to use the all-prevailing weapon of prayer. But forgetting this, they have gone to the fight, and they have been defeated right easily. O be sure, Christian, that you get Christ's strength! Vain is eloquence; vain are gifts of genius; vain is ability; vain are wisdom and learning--all these things may be serviceable when consecrated by the power of God--but apart from the strength of Christ, they shall all fail you! If you lean upon them, they shall all deceive you; if you lack the all-sufficient strength of Jesus Christ, you shall be weak and contemptible, however rich or however great you may be in these things.

Finally, the last message that I have is this--Paul says, in the name of all Christians, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." I ask, not in Paul's name only, but in the name of my Lord and Master Jesus Christ, "How is it that some of you are doing nothing?" If you could do nothing, you might be excused for not attempting it, but if you put in the slightest pretense to my text, you must allow my right to put this question to you. You say, "I can do all things"--in the name of reason, I ask why are you doing nothing? Look what multitudes of Christians there are in the world. Do you believe if they were all what they profess to be, and all to work for Christ, there

would long be the degrading poverty, the ignorance, the heathenism, which is to be found in this city? What cannot one individual accomplish? What could be done, therefore, by the tens of thousands of our Churches? Ah, professors! You will have much to answer for with regard to the souls of your fellow men! You are sent by God's Providence to be as lights in this world; but you are rather dark lanterns than lights! How often are you in company, and you never avail yourself of an opportunity of saying a word for Christ? How many times are you thrown in such a position that you have an excellent opportunity for rebuking sin, or for teaching holiness--and how seldom do you accomplish it? An old author named Stuckley, writing upon this subject, said, "There were some professed Christians who were not as good as Balaam's ass; for Balaam's ass once rebuked the mad prophet for his sin; but there were some Christians who never rebuked anyone all their lives long. They let sin go on under their very eyes, and yet they did not point it out; they saw sinners dropping into Hell, and they stretched not out their hands to pluck them as brands, from the burning; they walked in the midst of the blind, but they would not lead them; they stood in the midst of the deaf, but they would not hear for them! They were where misery was rife, but their mercy would not work upon the misery; they were sent to be saviors of men, but by their negligence they became men's destroyers."

"Am I my brother's keeper?" was the language of Cain. Cain has many children even at this day. You areyour brother's keeper! If you have Divine Grace in your heart, you are called to do good to others. Take care lest your garments are stained and sprinkled with the blood of your fellow men; mind, Christians, mind, lest that village in which you have found a quiet retreat from the cares of business, should rise up in judgment against you, to condemn you, because, having means and

opportunity, you use the village for rest, but never seek to do any good in it! Take care, masters and mistresses, lest your servant's souls be required of you at the Last Great Day. "I worked for my master; he paid me my wages, but he had no respect to his greater Master, and never spoke to me, though he heard me swear and saw me going on in my sins." Mind, I speak, Sirs, to some of you! I would I could thrust a thorn into the seat where you are now sitting, and make you spring for a moment to the dignity of a thought of your responsibilities! Why, Sirs, what has God made you for? What has He sent you here for? Did He make stars that should not shine, and suns that should give no light, and moons that should not cheer the darkness? Has He made rivers that shall not be filled with water, and mountains that shall not stay the clouds? Has He made even the forests which shall not give a habitation to the birds? Or has He made the prairie which shall not feed the wild flocks? And has He made you for nothing? Why, Man, the nettle in the corner of the Churchyard has its uses, and the spider on the wall serves her Maker. And you, a man in the image of God, a blood-bought man--a man who is in the path and track to Heaven, a man regenerated, twice created--are you made for nothing at all but to buy and to sell, to eat and to drink, to wake and to sleep, to laugh and to weep, to live to yourself? Small is that man who holds himself within his ribs; little is that man's soul who lives within himself. Yes, so little that he shall never be fit to be a compeer with the angels, and never fit to stand before Jehovah's Throne!

I am glad to see so large a proportion of men here. As I always have a very great preponderance of men--therefore, I suppose I am warranted in appealing to you--are there not here those who might be speakers for God, who might be useful in His service? The Missionary Societies need

you, young men! Will you deny yourselves for Christ? The ministry needs you--young men who have talents and ability--Christ needs you to preach His Word. Will you not give yourselves to Him? Tradesmen! Merchants! Christ needs you to alter the strain of business, and reverse the maxims of the present day--to cast a healthier tone into our commerce. Will you hold yourselves back? The Sunday school needs you! A thousand agencies require you! Oh, if there is a man here today who is going home to his house, and when he gets there will say this afternoon--"Thank God I have nothing to do." And if tomorrow when you come home from your business, you say, "Thank God I have no connection with any Church--I have nothing to do with the religious world; I leave that to other people. I never trouble myself about that"--you need not trouble yourself about going to Heaven! You need not trouble yourself about being where Christ is--at least until you can learn that more devoted lesson--"The love of Christ compels me; I must do something for Him! Lord, show me what You would have me to do. and I will begin this very day, for I feel that through You, Christ strengthening me, I can do all things."

God grant the sinner power to believe on Christ--power to repent--power to be saved; for, Christ strengthening him, even the poor lost sinner, "can do all things"--things impossible to fallen nature can he do--by the enabling of the Spirit, and the power of Christ resting on him!.

Chapter 58

Preaching! Man's Privilege and God's Power

A Sermon

(No. 347)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, November 25th, 1860, by the

REV. C. H. Spurgeon

At Exeter Hall, Strand.

"For 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."--Mark 6:20.

HE PREACHING OF THE WORD hath exceeding power. John commenced his ministry as an obscure individual, a man who led an almost hermit life. He begins to preach in the wilderness of Judea, but his cry is so powerful, that ere he has spoken many days, multitudes wait upon his words. He continues, clothed in that shaggy garment, and living on the simplest of food, still to utter the same cry of preparation for the kingdom of heaven--Repent! repent! repent! And now, not only the multitude, but the teachers, the respectable part of the community, come to listen to him. The Scribes and Pharisees sit down by Jordan's banks to listen to the Baptist's word. So powerful is his preaching that many of all ranks--publicans, sinners, and soldiers,--come unto him and are baptized by him in Jordan confessing their sins. Nay, the Scribes and Pharisees themselves seek baptism at his hands. Boldly, however, he repulses them; tells them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and warns them that their descent from Abraham does not entitle them to the blessings of the coming kingdom of the great Messiah. His word rings from one end of Judea to the other. All men wonder what this can mean, and already there begins to be a feeling in

the hearts of men that Messiah is at hand. Herod himself hears of John, and now you behold the spectacle of a cruel and unrighteous king sitting humbly to listen to this stern reformer. The Baptist changes not his preaching. The same boldness which had made him rebuke the common people and their teachers, now leads him to defy the wrath of Herod himself. He touches him in his most tender place, strikes his favourite sin, dashes down his idle lust to the ground, counts it his business not to speak of truth in generals but in particulars. Yea, he tells him to his very face, "It is not lawful for thee to take to thyself thy brother's wife."

Oh, what a power there is in the Word of God! I do not find that the Pharynx with all their learning had moved Herod. I discover not that the most mighty of the Grecian philosophers, or of the Gnostics who were then in existence, had any power to reach the heart of Herod. But the simple, plain preaching of John, his declaration of the Word with all honesty and simplicity, had power to pin Herod by the ear, to vibrate in his heart and to awaken his conscience, for sure we are it was awakened; if the awakening did not end in his conversion, at any rate it made him troubled in his sins so that he could not go on peaceably in iniquity. Ah, my dear friends, we want nothing in these times for revival in the world but the simple preaching of the gospel. This is the great battering ram that shall dash down the bulwarks of iniquity. This is the great light that shall scatter the darkness. We need not that men should be adopting new schemes and new plans. We are glad of the agencies and assistances which are continually arising; but after all, the true Jerusalem blade, the sword that can cut to the piercing asunder of the joints and marrow, is preaching the Word of God. We must never neglect it, never despise it. The age in which the pulpit it despised, will be an age in which gospel truth will cease to

be honored. Once put away God's ministers, and you have to a great extent taken the candle out of the candlestick; quenched the lamps that God hath appointed in the sanctuary. Our missionary societies need continually to be reminded of this; they get so busy with translations, so diligently employed with the different operations of civilization, with the founding of stores, with the encouragement of commerce among a people, that they seem to neglect--at least in some degree--that which is the great and master weapon of the minister, the foolishness of preaching by which it pleases God to save them that believe. Preaching the gospel will effectually civilize, while introducing the arts of civilization will sometimes fail. Preaching the gospel will lift up the barbarian, while attempts to do it by philosophy will be found ineffectual. We must go among them, and tell them of Christ; we must point them to heaven; we must lead them to the cross; shall they be elevated in their character, and raised in their condition. But by no other means. God forbid that we should begin to depreciate preaching. Let us still honor it; let us look to it as God's ordained instrumentality, and we shall yet see in the world a repetition of great wonders wrought by the preaching in the name of Jesus Christ.

To-day, I shall want your attention to a subject which concerns us all, but more especially those, who being hearers of the Word, are hearers only, and not doers of the same. I shall first attempt to show the blessedness of hearing the Word of God; secondly, the responsibilities of the hearer; and then, thirdly, those accompaniments which are necessary to go with the hearing of the Word of God, to make it effectual to save the soul.

I. First of all, my dear friends, let us speak a little about THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING THE WORD.

The prophet constantly asserts, "Blessed are the ears which hear the

things that we hear; and blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see." Prophets and kings desired it long, but died without the sight. Often do the seers of old use language similar to this, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." Godly men accept it as an omen of happy times when their eyes should see their teachers. The angels sang the blessedness of it when they descended from on high, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Behold, we bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto you and to all people." The angels' song is in harmony with the seers' testimony. Both conjoin to prove what I assert, that we are blessed in having the privilege of listening to God's Word.

Let us enlarge upon this point. If we reflect upon what the preaching of the Word is, we shall soon see that we are highly privileged in enjoying it. The preaching of the Word is the scattering of the seed. The hearers are the ground on which the good seed falls. Those who hear not the Word are as the arid desert, which has never seen a handful of the good corn; or as the unploughed waves of the sea which have never been gladdened with the prospect of a harvest. But when the sower goes forth to sow seed, he scatters it broadcast upon you that hear, and there is to you the hope that in you the good seed shall take root and bring forth fruit a hundred fold. True, some of you may be but wayside hearers, and evil birds may soon devour the seed. At least, it does fall upon you, nor is it the fault of the seed, but of the ground, if that seed does not grow. True, you may be as stony-ground hearers, who for awhile receive the Word and rejoice therein, but having no root in yourselves, the seed may wither away. That again, I say, does not diminish your privilege, though it increases your guilt, inasmuch as it is no fault of the seed nor of the sun, but the fault of the stony

ground, if the fruit is not nourished unto perfection. And you, inasmuch as you are the field, the broad acres upon which the gospel husbandman scatters the precious grain, you enjoy the privilege which is denied to heathens and idolaters.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a net which is cast into the sea, and which gathers of divers kinds. Now you represent the fish of the sea, and it is happy indeed for you that you are where the net is thrown, for there is at least the hope that you may be entangled in its meshes, and may be drawn out of the sea of sin, and gathered into the vessels of salvation. If you were far, far away, where the net is never cast, there would be no hope of your being caught therein. But here you are gathered round the fisherman's humble boat, and as he casts his net into the sea, he hopes that some of you may be caught therein,--and assuredly gracious is your privilege! But if you be not caught, it shall not be the fault of the net, but the fault of your own wilfulness, which shall make you fly from it, lest you be graciously taken therein.

Moreover, the preaching of the gospel is very much in this day like the mission of Christ upon earth. When Christ was on earth he went about walking through the midst of sick folk, and they laid them in their beds by the wayside, so that as Jesus passed by, they might touch the hem of his garment and be made whole. You, to-day, when you hear the Word, are like the sick in their beds where Jesus passes by. You are like blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside begging, in the very road along which the Son of David journeys. Lo, a multitude have come to listen to him. He is present wherever his truth is preached: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the ends of the world." You are not like sick men in their chambers, or sick men far away in Tyre and Sidon, but you are like the men who lay at Bethesda's pool under the five porches,

waiting for the moving of the water. Angel of God, move the waters this day! or rather, O Jesus, give thou grace to the impotent man that he may now step in.

Yet further, we may illustrate the privilege of those who hear the Word by the fact that the Word of God is the bread of heaven. I can only compare this great number of people gathered here to-day to the sight which was seen upon the mountain in the days of Jesus. They were hungry, and the disciples would have sent them away. But Jesus bade them sit down in ranks upon the grass, as you are sitting down in rows here, and there were but a few barley loaves and five small fishes (fit type and representation of the minister's own poverty of words and thoughts!) But Jesus blessed the bread, and blessed the fishes, and brake them; and they were multiplied, and they did all eat and were filled. So you are as these men. God give you grace to eat. There is not given to you a stone instead of bread, nor a scorpion instead of an egg; but Christ Jesus shall be fully and freely preached to you. May you have appetites to long for the Word, faith to partake of the Word, and may it be to you the bread of life sent down from heaven.

Yet often in Scripture we find the Word of God compared to a light. "The people that sat in darkness saw a great light." "Unto them that dwell in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death, has a great light arisen." Those who hear not the Word are men that grope their way not only in a fog, but in a thick Egyptian darkness that may be felt. Before your eyes to-day is held up the flaming torch of God's Word, to shew you your path through the thick darkness. Nay, to-day there is not only a torch, but in the preaching of the Word the Sun of Righteousness himself arises with healing beneath his wings. You are not they that grope for the wall like blind men; you are not as they who are obliged to say, "We see not the path to heaven; we know not the

way to God; we fear we shall never be reconciled to Christ." Behold, the light of heaven shineth upon your eyeballs, and, if ye perish, ye must perish wilfully; if ye sink into hell, it will be with the path to heaven shining before you, if damned, it will be not because you do not know the way of salvation, but because you wilfully and wickedly put it from you, and choose for yourselves the path of death. It must even be then a privilege to listen to the Word, if the Word be as a light, and as bread, and as healing, as a gospel net, and as divine seed.

Once more let me remind you, there is yet a greater privilege connected with the Word of God than this--for all this were nothing without the last. As I look upon a multitude of unconverted men and women, I am reminded of Ezekiel's vision. He saw lying in the valley of Hinnom multitudes of bones, the flesh of which had been consumed by fire, and the bones themselves were dried as in a furnace, scattered hither and thither. There with other bones in other charnel-houses, lying scattered at the mouths of other graves; but Ezekiel was not sent to them; to the valley of Hinnom was he sent, and there alone. And he stood by faith, and began to practice the foolishness of preaching, "Ye dry bones hear the word of the Lord; thus saith the Lord, ye dry bones live." And as be spoke there was a rustling, each bone sought its fellow; and as he spake again, these bones united and stood erect, as he continued his discourse the flesh clothed the skeleton; when he concluded by crying, "Come from the winds, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," they stood upon their feet an exceeding great army. The preached Word is like Ezekiel's prophecy; life goes forth with the word of the faithful minister, when we say, "Repent!" We know that sinners cannot repent of themselves, but God's grace sweetly constrains them to repent. When we bid them believe, it is not because of any natural capacity for faith that lies within them, but because

the command "Believe and live," when given by the faithful minister of God, hath in it a quickening power; as much as when Peter and John said to the man with the withered hand, "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, stretch out thy hand," and it was done. So do we say to the dead in sin--"Sinner, live; repent and be converted; repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus." Owned of God the Spirit, it becomes a quickening cry, and you are made to live. Blessed are the dry bones that lay in a valley where Ezekiel prophecies; and blessed are ye that are found where Jesus Christ's name is preached, where his power is invoked by a heart which believes in its energy; where his truth is preached to you by one, who despite of many mistakes knows this one thing--that Christ is both the power of God and the wisdom of God unto every one that believeth. This consideration alone then--the peculiar power of the Word of God, might compel us to say, "That indeed there is a blessedness in hearing it."

But, my dear friends, let us look at it in another light. Let us appeal to those who have heard the Word and have received good in their own souls by it. Men and brethren, I speak to hundreds of you, who know in your own soul what the Word of God is. Let me ask you--you who have been converted from a thousand crimes--you who have been picked from the dunghill and made to sit among the princely children of God--let me ask you what you think of the preaching of the Word. Why, there are hundreds of you men and women, who if this were the proper time and occasion, would rise from your seat and say, "I bless God that ever I listened to the preached Word. I was a stranger to all truth, but I was enticed to come and listen, and God met with me." Some of you can look back to the first Sunday on which you ever entered a place of worship for twenty years, and that place was this very hall. Here you came an unaccustomed worshipper to tread God's hallowed floor. You stood and

knew not what you were at. You wondered what the service of God's house could be. But you have reason to remember that Sabbath-day, and you will have reason to remember it to all eternity. Oh that day! it broke your bonds and set you free; that day aroused your conscience and made you feel your need of Christ. That day was a blessed turning point in your history, in which you were led to escape from hell, turn your back on sin, and fly for refuge to Christ Jesus. Since that day let me ask you, what has the Word of God been to you? Has it not been constantly a quickening word? You have grown dull and careless during the week; has not the Sabbath sermon stirred you up afresh? You have sometimes all but lost your hope, and has not the hearing of the Word revived you? Why I know that some of you have come up to the house of God as hungry men would come to a place where bread was distributed, you come to the house of God with a light and happy step, as thirsty men would come to a flowing well, and you rejoice when the day comes round: you only wish there were seven Sabbath days a week, that you might always be listening to God's Word. You can say with Dr. Watts,

"Father, my soul would still abide within thy temple, near thy side.
And if my feet must hence depart, still keep thy dwelling in my heart."

Personally I have to bless God for many good books. I thank God for Dr. Doddridge's Rise and Progress of Religion; I thank God for Baxter's Call to the Unconverted; for Alleyne's Alarm to Sinners; I bless God for James's Anxious Enquirer; but my gratitude most of all is due to God, not for books, but for the living Word--and that too addressed to me by a poor uneducated man, a man who had never received any training for the ministry, and probably will never be heard of in this life, a man engaged in business, no doubt of a menial kind during the week, but who had just enough of grace to say on the Sabbath, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth. "The books were good, but the man

was better. The revealed Word awakened me, it was the living Word saved me, and I must ever attach peculiar value to the hearing of the truth, for by it I received the joy and peace in which my soul delights.

But further, my dear hearers, the value of the Word preached and heard may be estimated by the opinions which the lost have of it now. Hearken to one man, it is not a dream nor a picture of my imagination which I now present to you, it is one of Jesus Christ's own graphic descriptions. There lies a man in hell who has heard Moses and the prophets. His time is passed, he can hear them no more. But so great is the value he attaches to the preached Word, that he says, "Father Abraham, send Lazarus, for I have five brethren, let him testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." He felt that if Lazarus could speak--speak personally his own personal testimony to the truth, that peradventure they might be saved. Oh! what would the damned in hell give for a sermon could they but listen once more to the church-going bell and go up to the sanctuary! Ah, my brethren, they would consent, if it were possible, to bear ten thousand years of hell's torments, if they might but once more have the Word preached to them! Ah! if I had a congregation such as that would be, of men who have tasted the wrath of God, of men who know what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of an angry God, oh, how would they lean forward to catch every word, with what deep attention would they all regard the preacher, each one saying, "Is there a hope for me? May I not escape from the place of doom? Good God! may this fire not be quenched and I be plucked as a brand from the burning?" Value then, I pray you, the privilege while you have it now. We are always foolish, and we never value mercy till we lose it. But I do adjure you cast not aside this folly, value it while it is called to-day, value that which once lost will seem to us to be priceless beyond all conception,--estimated then

at its true worth, invaluable, and precious beyond a miser's dream.

Let me again ask you to value it in a brighter light--by the estimation of the saints before the throne. Ye glorified ones, what think ye of the preaching of the Word? Hark to them! Will they not sing it forth--"Faith came to us by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It was by it that we were led to confess our sins; by it we were led to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb?" I am sure they before the throne think not lightly of God's ministers. They would not speak with cold language of the truth of the Gospel which is preached in your ears. No, in their eternal hallelujahs they bless the Lord who sent the Gospel to them, as they sing--"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, unto him be glory for ever and ever." Value, then, the preaching of the Word, and count yourselves happy that you are allowed to listen to it.

II. My second head deals more closely with the text, and I hope it will likewise appeal more closely to our consciences--THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEARER OF THE WORD.

Herod, you will perceive, went as far as very many of us, perhaps farther than some, and yet was lost. Our responsibilities concerning the Word do not end with hearing it. Herod heard it, but hearing is not enough. Ye may sit for fifty years in the sanctuary of God hearing the gospel, and be rather the worse than the better for all you have heard, if it end in hearing. It is not the Word entering into one ear, and coming forth out of the other ear which converts the soul but it is the echoing of the Word down in the very heart, and the abiding of the truth in the conscience. I know there are very many who think they have fulfilled all their religion when they go to their church or chapel.

Let us not deceive you in this thing. Your church-going, and your chapel-going, though they give you great privileges, yet involve the

most solemn responsibilities. Instead of being in themselves saving, they may be damning to you unless you avail yourselves of the privileges presented to you by them. I doubt not that hell is crammed with church and chapel-goers, and that there are whole wards in that infernal prison house that are filled with men who heard the Word, but who stopped there, who sat in their pews, but never fled to Christ; who listened to the call, but did not obey it. "Yes," saith one," but I do more than simply hear the Word, for I make choice of the most earnest preacher I can find." So did Herod, and yet he perished. He was not a hearer of a man with a soft tongue, for John did not speak as one clothed in fine raiment, John was not a reed shaken with the wind; he was a prophet, "Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet;" faithful in all his house, as a good servant of his God. There was never a more honest and faithful preacher than John. And you too, may with care have selected the most excellent minister, not for his eloquence, but for his earnestness; not for his talent, but for his power of faith, and you may listen to him, and that too with attention, and after all may be a cast-away. The responsibilities involved in listening to such a man may be so weighty, that like a millstone about your neck, they may help to sink you lower than the lowest hell. Take heed to yourselves, that you rest not in the outward Word, however fitly spoken, or however attentively heard; but reach forward to something deeper and better. "Yes," saith a third, "but I do not only hear the most earnest preacher, but I go out of my way to hear him. I have left my parish church, for instance, and I come walking five or six miles--I am willing to walk ten, or even twenty, if I can but hear a sermon--and I am not ashamed to mingle with the poor. I may have rank and position in life, but I am not ashamed to listen to the earnest preacher, though he should belong to the most despised of sects" Yea, and Herod did the

like, Herod was a king, and yet listened to the peasant-prophet. Herod is clothed in purple, and yet listens to the Baptist in his shaggy garment. While Herod fared sumptuously every day, he who ate locusts and wild honey reproves him boldly to his face; and with all this, Herod was not saved. So, also, you may walk many a mile to listen to the truth, and that year after year, but unless ye go further than that, unless ye obey the Word, unless it sinks deep into your inmost soul, ye shall perish still--perish under the sound of the Word--the very Word of God becoming a death-knell to your soul, dreadfully tolling you down to deep destruction. But I hear another object. "I, sir, not only take the trouble to hear, but I hear very gladly. I am delighted when I listen. I am not a captious, critical hearer, but I feel a pleasure in listening to God's Word. Is not that a blessed sign? Do you not think that I must be saved, if I rejoice to hear that good sound?" No, my friend, no; it is a hopeful sign, but it is a very uncertain one, for is it not written in our text, that Herod heard the Word gladly? The smile might be on his face, or the tear in his eye while the Baptist denounced sin; there was a something in his conscience which made him feel glad that there was one honest man alive; that in a time of enormous corruption, there was one fearless soul that dare with unblanched cheek, to correct sin in high places. He was like Henry the Eighth, who when Hugh Latimer presented him on New Year's day with a napkin, on which was embroidered the words, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" instead of casting the preacher into prison, he said, "He was glad there was one man who dared to tell him and he stands up for you and defends you, but he is as bad a man as there is living." Oh sirs! I am glad you listen to me; I do hope that the hammer may yet break your hearts but I do conjure you, give up your sins. Oh! for your own soul's sake, do not abide in your

transgressions, for I warn you, if I have spoken faithfully to you, you cannot sin so cheaply as other men. I have never prosed away to you; I have never been too polite to warn you of perdition, I speak to you in rough and earnest terms--I may claim that credit without egotism. If you perish, sirs, it will little boot you that ye stood up in my defense; it will little serve you that ye tried to screen the minister from slander and from calumny. I would have you think of yourselves, even though ye thought less of me and my reputation. I would have you love yourselves, and so escape from hell, and fly to heaven while yet the gate of mercy stands on the jar, and the hour of mercy is not passed for ever. Think not, I say, that hearing the Word gladly is enough; you may do so and yet be lost.

But more than that. "Ah," says one, "you have just anticipated what I was about to say. I not only listen gladly, but I respect the preacher. I would not hear a man say a word against him." It was so with Herod. "He observed John," it is said, "and he accounted him a just man and a holy," and yet though he honored the preacher, he was lost himself. Ah! what multitudes go to our fashionable places of worship, and as they come out they say to one another, "What a noble sermon!" and then they go to their houses, and sit down and say, "What a fine turn he gave to that period! what a rich thought that was! what a sparkling metaphor!" And is it for this that we preach to you? Is your applause the breath of our nostrils? Do you think that God's ministers are sent into the world to tickle your ears and be unto you as one that plays a merry tune on a goodly instrument? God knows I would sooner break stones on the road than be a preacher for oratory's sake. I would never stand here to play the hypocrite. No, it is your hearts we want, not your admiration. It is your espousal to Christ, and not your love to us. Oh that we could break your hearts, and awake your consciences, we would

not mind what other results should follow. We should feel that we were accepted of God, if we were but felt with power to be God's servants in the hearts and thoughts of men. No, think not that to honor the preacher is enough. Ye may perish praising the minister in your dying moments.

Yet further. Some one may say, "I feel I am a better man through hearing the minister, and is not that a good sign?" Yes, it is a good sign, but it is not a sure one for all that. For Herod they said did many things. Look at the text. It is expressly said there, "He observed him, and when he heard him, he did many things." I should not wonder after that, that Herod became somewhat more merciful in his government, somewhat less exacting, a little more outwardly moral, and though he continued in his lasciviousness, yet he tried to cover it up with respectable excuses. "He did many things." That was doing a very long way, but Herod was Herod still. And you sirs, it may be, have been led to give up drunkenness, through the preaching of the Word: to shut up the shop that used to be opened on a Sunday. You cannot now swear; you would not now cheat. It is good, it is very good; but it is not enough.

All this there may be, but yet the root of the matter may not be in you. To honor the Sabbath outwardly will not save you, unless you enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Merely to close the shop is not enough. The heart itself must be shut up against the love of sin. To cease blasphemy is not sufficient, though it is good, for there may be blasphemy in the heart, when there is none upon the tongue. "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall in nowise enter the kingdom of heaven." For "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The Lord grant that you may not rest with outward cleansing, with moral purification, but strike deeper into the root, and soul, and marrow of these blessings, the change of your

heart, the bringing of your soul into union with Christ. One thing I must also remark about Herod, with the Greek text in view "He did many things," will allow me to infer that he felt many doubts. As a good old commentator says, "John smote him so hard, that he could not help feeling it. He gave him such home blows that he could not but be bruised every now and then, and yet though his conscience was smitten, his heart was never renewed." It is a pleasant sight to see men weep under the Word--to mark them tremble; but then we remember Felix. Felix trembled. But he said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee. Happy the minister who hears the people say, "Almost thou persuadest us to be Christians." But then, we remember Agrippa--we remember how he returns to his sins, and seeks not the Savior. We are glad if your consciences are awakened, we rejoice if you are made to doubt and question yourselves, but we mourn because your doubts are so transient, because your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew.

I have tracked some of you to your houses. I have known of some who after a solemn sermon, when they got home could scarcely eat their meal. They sit down, leaning their head on their hand. The wife is glad to think that her husband is in a hopeful state. He rises from his seat; he goes up stairs; he walks about the house he says he is miserable. At last he comes down and sets his teeth together, and says "Well, if I am to be damned I shall be damned; if I am to be saved I shall be saved, and there's an end of it." Then he rouses himself, saying, "I cannot go to hear that man again: he is too hard with me. I must either give up my sins, or give up listening to the Word; the two things will not exist together." Happy, I say, are we to see that man troubled; but our unhappiness is so much the greater when we see him shaking it off--the dog returning to his vomit, and the sow that was

washed to her wallowing in the mire. O God, save us from this, let us never be men who spring up fairly, but wither away suddenly and disappoint all hope. O God, let us not be as Balaam, who prayed that his last end might be with the righteous, but returned to defy Israel, to provoke the Lord God, and to perish in the midst of his iniquity.

And now I hear many of you say, "Well if all these things are not enough, what is it that is expected of the hearer of the Word?" Spirit of God! help us so to speak that the Word may come home to all!

Believer in Christ, if you would hear the Word to profit, you must hear it obediently. You must hear it as James and John did, when the Master said "Follow me," and they left their nets and their boats and then followed him. You must do the Word as well as hear it, yielding up your hearts to its sway, being willing to walk in the road which it maps, to follow the path which it lays before you. Hearing it obediently, you must also hear it personally for yourselves, not for others, but for yourselves alone. You must be as Zacchaeus, who was in the sycamore tree, and the Master said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, to-day I must abide in thy house." The Word will never bless you till it comes home directly to yourself. You must be as Mary, who when the Master spoke to her she did not know his voice, till he said unto her, "Mary!" and she said, "Rabboni." There must be an individual hearing of the truth, and a reception of it for yourself in your own heart. Then, too, you must hear the truth penitently. You must be as that Mary, who when she listened to the Word, must needs go and wash the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. There must be tears for your many sins, a true confession of your guilt before God.

But above all you must hear it believingly. The Word must not be unto you as mere sound, but as matter of fact. You must be as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened; or as the trembling jailer, who believed on the

Lord Jesus with all his house and was baptized forthwith. You must be as the thief, who could pray, "Lord, remember me," and who could believe the precious promise given, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." God give us grace so to listen, and then shall our responsibilities under the Word be cleared up receiving the power of the Word into our conscience, with demonstration of the Holy Spirit, and fruits agreeable to our profession.

III. Now to conclude. I want your serious attention to THE NEEDFUL ACCOMPANIMENTS OF HEARING THE WORD.

There are many men who get blessed by the Word through God's sovereign grace without any of the accompaniments of which I am now about to speak. We have, connected with us, as a Church, a brother in Christ, who came into this place of worship with his gin bottle in his pocket one night. A chance hit of mine--as some would have thought it, when I pointed to the man and told him of it, not knowing aught but that the feeling that I was moved thereunto--was the man's first awakening. That man came without any preparation, and God blessed the word. Numerous have been the instances, which those who have not proved them deem utterly incredible, in which persons have absolutely come to me after a sermon, and begged me not to tell anybody about them, being firmly persuaded from what I said that I knew their private history, whereas I knew no more about them than a stranger in the market. But the Word of God will find men out. Preach the gospel and it will always find the man out and tell him all his secrets, carrying the lamp of the Lord into the hidden recesses of the heart.

But to you as a mass I speak this. If you will be blessed under the Word, would that you would pray before you come here. You sometimes hear of preparation for the Lord's Supper--I am sure if the Word is to be blessed, there ought to be a preparation for hearing it. Do you,

when you come up to this house, pray to God before you come, "Lord, give the minister words; help him to speak to me to-day; Lord, save me to-day; may the Word to-day be a quickening word to my poor soul?" Ah! my friends, ye would never go without the blessing, if ye come up prayerfully looking for it, having asked it of God. Then after prayer, if you would be blessed under the Word, there should be an expectation of being blessed. It is wonderful the differences between the same sermon preached in different places, and I do not doubt that the same words uttered by different men would have different effects. With some men the hearers expect they will say something worth hearing; they listen, and the man does say something worth hearing; another man might say just the same; nobody receives it as other than common-place. Now if you can come up to the house of God expecting that there will be something for you, you will have it. We always get what we angle for. If we come up to find fault, there always will be faults to find. If we come up to get good, good will be gotten. God will send no man empty away; he shall have what he came for. If he came merely for curiosity, he shall have his curiosity gratified; if he came for good, he shall not be disappointed. We may be disappointed at man's door; we never were at God's. Man may send us away empty, but God never will. Then while listening to the Word with expectation, it will naturally come to pass that you will listen with deep attention. A young boy who had been awakened to a sense of sin, was remarked to be exceedingly attentive to sermons, and when asked why it was, he said, "Because I do not know which part of the sermon may be blessed to me, but I know that whichever it is, the devil will do his utmost to take my attention off then for fear I should be blessed;" so he would listen to the whole of it, lest by any means the Word of life should be let slip. So do you, and you will certainly be in the way of being blessed by the Word. Next

to that, all through the sermon be appropriating it, saying to yourselves, "Does that belong to me?" If it be a promise, say, "Is that mine?" If it be a threatening, do not cover yourselves with the shield of hard-heartedness, but say, "If that threatening belongs to me, let it have its full force on me." Sit under the sermon with your breasts open to the Word; be ready to let the arrow come in.

Above all, this will be of no avail unless you hear with faith, Now faith cometh by hearing There must be faith mingled with the hearing. But you say, "What is faith? Is faith to believe that Christ died for me?" "No, it is not. The Arminian says that faith is to believe that Christ died for you. He teaches in the first place that Christ died for everybody, therefore, he says, he died for you; of course he died for everybody, and if he died for everybody he must have died for you. That is not faith at all. I hold, on the other hand, that Christ died for believers, that he died for no man that will be lost, that all he died for will be saved, that his intention cannot be frustrated in any man; that if he died to save any man, that man will be saved. Your question to-day is not whether Christ died for you or not, but it is this;--the Scripture says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And what is it to believe? To believe is to trust it is the same word, though believe is not so plain a word as trust. To trust Christ is to believe. I feel I cannot save myself, that all my doings and feelings cannot save me; I trust Christ to save me. That is faith; and the moment I trust Christ, I then know that Christ died for me, for they who trust him, he has surely died to save, so surely he died to save them that he will save them, so finished his work that he will never lose them, according to his own Word--"give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" "But may I trust it!" says one. May! You are commanded to do

it. "But I dare not." What! dare not do what God bids you! Rather say--"I dare not live without Christ, I dare not disobey. God has said--"This is the commandment, that ye believe on the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." This is the great commandment which is sent to you. To-day trust Christ and you are saved; disobey that command, and do what you will you are damned.

Go home to your chamber, and say unto God, "I desire to believe what I have heard; I desire to trust my immortal soul in Jesus' hands. Give me genuine faith; give me a real trust. Save me now, and save me hereafter." I dare avow it--I never can believe that any man so hearing the Word can by any possibility perish. Hear it, receive it, pray over it, and trust Christ through it, and if you are lost, there can be none saved. If this foundation give way, another can never be laid. If you fall, we all fall together. If trusting in Christ you can perish, all God's prophets, and martyrs, and confessors, and ministers, perish too. You cannot. He will never fail you; trust him now.

Spirit of God! incline the hearts of men to trust Christ. Enable them now to overcome their pride and their timidity, and may they trust the Savior now, and they are saved for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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