SPURGEON'S SERMONS VOLUME 16: 1870

by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon's powerful sermons on baptism and Christian discipleship.

60 Chapters

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Chapter 0

Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 16: 1870

Chapter 1

Voices from the Excellent Glory

(No. 909)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 9, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." Matthew 3:16,17.

"While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a Voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased; hear Him." Matthew 17:5.

"Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." John 12:28.

THAT our Lord was the true Messiah of God was proved by His answering to all those prophecies which described the promised Messenger of the Covenant. His miracles also proved that God was with Him, and from their character they marked Him out as the ordained Deliverer. To open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears were works foretold as denoting the Messiah. His teachings were equally clear proofs of His mission--there is about them an authority found nowhere else. The words which He spoke are Spirit and Life. They are self-evidencing in their elevation, purity, perfection. "Never man spoke like this Man."

His Testimony is unique and bears a majesty of Deity about it which

bespeaks itself. His resurrection also was a clear proof that he was sent of God. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." But in addition to all this and a great deal more, the Divine Father was pleased, also, to speak out of Heaven with an audible voice to declare that Jesus of Nazareth was no other than the Son of God and the promised Christ for whom the faithful were watching. Thrice did the majesty of Heaven break its sublime silence and bear witness to the Incarnate God. The three occasions, as mentioned in our texts, are most instructive, and shall command our attention this morning. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

Without any further preface, let us consider the three Testimonies given to our Lord by the voice of the Most High. If time permits we will then notice one or two instructive circumstances connected with them. And we will close by drawing a great practical lesson from them.

I. In endeavoring to bring before your attentive minds THE THREE OCCASIONS ON WHICH THE FATHER, BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, BORE WITNESS TO HIS SON, I would invite you to observe, first, when these voices were heard.

Angels had proclaimed His birth, and wise men had seen His star, but the Divine Voice was not heard during the first thirty years of His sojourn. The three celestial utterances were reserved for the brief period of His public life. The first came at the commencement of His public ministry--at His Baptism. The second some little time after the central point of His ministry. And the last, just before He closed His work, by being offered up. It is a fit thing to pray that all our works may be begun, continued, and ended under the Divine blessing. Certainly our Lord Jesus Christ, as to His public work, both began it, continued it, and ended it with the publicly declared witness of the Most High. How cheering a thing it is at the beginning of a great

enterprise to have from God clear Testimony that He has sent you upon it! Such was the Testimony given to the Master in the waters of Jordan, when He was first announced as "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

How sweetly encouraging it is to the soul when the labor is heavy, the opposition vehement, and the spirit faint, to receive another affirming word from the excellent Glory! Such was that which came to Jesus on the Holy Mount, when retiring from the multitude He sought the refreshment of prayer and fellowship with God. Then, as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistering, and a Voice came out of the cloud, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased, hear Him."

And best of all, when our work is almost done, and the shadows of evening are lengthening--when we are about to depart into the land of spirits--what a consolation it is to receive another refreshment from the Divine mouth! Such our Savior had a little while before He was lifted up from the earth. In answer to His fervent cry, "Father, glorify Your name," there came a Voice from Heaven saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

In our departing hours we are most anxious about that which was our life's dearest object. The lifework of Christ was to glorify His Father's name. Concerning that He prayed, and concerning that the Voice gave full assurance. The result of the Lord's lifework was declared to be ensured, and therefore, wrapping Himself about with that heavenly Testimony, the great Redeemer went bravely to His death. It is to be noted, then, that at the beginning, the middle, and end of our Master's work, the Divine Voice was heard.

The first celestial witness was uttered after He had lived for thirty years in comparative obscurity. It seemed meet that when He first

appeared, there should be some token that He was what He professed to be. That heavenly declaration, be it also remembered, came just before His memorable temptation. He was to be forty days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, and among the horrible suggestions hissed forth from the serpent's mouth would be the doubt, "if you are the Son of God." What better forearming of our great Champion than the witness, "This is My Beloved Son"?

How in the recollection of that paternal Testimony would the Son be made strong to overcome all the temptations of the Fiend, or to endure the hunger which followed the forty days of lonely fast! Thus ever, my Brethren, it is not with the Master, only, but with the servants.

Before temptation there comes spiritual sustenance which makes the heart strong in endurance. Like Elijah of old, the Believer falls asleep. Being awakened, he eats bread of Heaven's own providing and in the strength of that meat he journeys forty days through the wilderness without weariness. Expect that when the Lord tries you He will also send you strength to sustain you under it.

The second occasion of the heavenly utterance was when our Lord was about (according to Luke) to send out other seventy disciples to preach the Word. The twelve had healed the sick, cast out devils and done many mighty works. But now the laborers were to be increased and the harvest more rapidly ingathered. The seventy Evangelists were to carry the Divine Crusade through all the Holy Land.

Brethren, it is instructive that Heaven gave to our Savior, before extending His agencies of mercy, a fresh token for good. And we also, when the Lord calls us to wider service, may go up to the mountain to pray. And while we are there we, too, may expect to enjoy the comforting and strengthening witness of the Spirit within. The heavenly Voice shall whisper, "You are Mine," and we shall descend with radiant

countenance to fight anew the battles of the Lord.

The third heavenly Testimony came to our Lord just before His sufferings and death. I need not say to you how well-timed was that witness. With such a death before Him, with such circumstances surrounding Him--all tending to make His agony sharper, and His death more terrible than any which had fallen to the lot of man before. With Gethsemane, with Gabbatha, with Golgotha all before Him. With such words as these yet to be uttered, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And these, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"--it was meet that the oppressed Sufferer, who must tread the winepress alone--should receive at the outset a Word from the Throne of the Highest, meeting exactly the point about which His soul was most concerned, namely, the glory of the Father's name.

While still enlarging upon the times when the Divine Voice was heard, we may also note that the first came to our Lord when He was in the attitude of obedience. Why needed He to be baptized? It is a sinner's ordinance--Jesus is no sinner and needs no washing, no death, no burial! But He takes the sinner's place, and therefore comes to be buried in Jordan, for, "Thus," says He, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." It was to Christ an act of obedience. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient to every ordinance of God, and hence He yielded Himself to Baptism. Then came the Voice, "This is My Beloved Son."

Brothers and Sisters, learn that when you are in the path of filial obedience you may expect the Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God! But if you live in neglect of any known duty--if you are willfully unobservant

of any command of Christ--you may expect that there shall be withheld from you the sweet assuring tokens of Divine love. But if you are

scrupulously obedient on desiring to know what is the Lord's will, and then promptly do it--not asking the reason why, nor using your own tastes, or indulging your own whims--then in the path of obedience, especially if it costs you much, you may expect to have the witness in yourself that you are a child of God.

The second attestation came to our Master in His devout retirement. He had gone up to the mountain to pray. His desire was to be alone. He had taken with Him His accustomed bodyguard of three--Peter, James, and John--that they might be with Him while His soul communed with God. I doubt not that, as in the garden, they were bid to remain a stone's cast distance off, for surely Jesus poured out His soul before God alone. And then it was that suddenly the Glory of God shone upon Him. Then, in His retirement, Moses and Elijah appeared, coming forth from the spirit-world to commune with Him. Then did the Father utter a second time the Testimony, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."

Brothers and Sisters, you too, like your Master, may expect to receive Divine Testimonies when you are on the mount of communion alone, when your fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The neglect of retirement will probably rob you of such assurances. If your prayer should be, "Show me a token for good," the answer will be, "Get you to the top of Tabor, get you away to your retirement. There will I give you the token which your heart desires." But to live evermore spending our strength in public, wasting ourselves in the turmoil of this world, and to neglect the soul-refreshing ordinance of private devotion is to deprive the inner man of the richest of spiritual delights.

The third Testimony came to our Lord in His ministry. He was preaching in the temple when the Father responded to His prayer. Now while I have

spoken a good word for obedience, and also have sought to magnify retirement, let it never be forgotten that public service is equally acceptable to God. Our Lord had been conversing with certain enquiring Greeks and declaring the living power of His death to all who chose to hear Him. In that same hour the Father gave an audible answer to His prayer. If you, my Brethren, are called to any form of service, I beseech you, under no pretext neglect it. The neglect of anything for which you have the talent, and to which you have the call, may deprive you of the inward witness.

Bear much fruit--so shall you be His disciples consciously so. Keep His Commandments--so shall you abide in His love and know it. Forget not to be obedient, forget not to be prayerful in retirement, but forget not, also, that you are meant to shine as a light in this world. Forget not that you must work while it is called today. Forget not that you are not sent into this life merely to enjoy spiritual recreation or even celestial refreshment--but to do a work which no other can do--and for which you must give a personal account.

We must now dismiss the question of the times, and briefly consider to whom the attestations were given. The first at Baptism, came to John and to our Lord, and most probably to them, only. We do not think the Voice from the opened Heaven was necessarily heard by anyone but John and our Lord. The token of the descending dove was given to John as the sign by which he should discern the Christ. "And I knew Him not. But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit."

John probably gathered from all that he had heard of Jesus that He was the great Bridegroom to whom he stood as a friend. But he was not to follow his own judgment--he was to receive a token from God

Himself--and till that token came he could not act as one fully and indisputably convinced. When he had immersed our Lord he saw the heavens opened, saw the Spirit descending upon Him, and heard the confirming Voice. And then he knew beyond all doubt that Jesus was the Christ. To the Baptist, alone, that Voice was audible. And then through him it was published to all Judea.

The second Testimony had a somewhat wider range--it came not to one, but to three. Peter, James, and John were present. What if I say to five? For there were with them Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets. The three Apostles were the representatives of the Christian Church--as if to show that Law and Gospel meet in Jesus--and the things in Heaven and the things on earth are gathered together in one in Him. The Testimony enlarges, you see. At first one opened ear hears it, next five are assured.

The third time the Voice was heard by many. How many I cannot say, but the crowd in the temple heard it. Many heard it who did not understand it, for they said it thundered--perhaps perversely determining not to believe in the Presence of God--but to ascribe that articulate Voice rather to a rumbling thunder than to the Divine mouth. Others who confessed that they heard words, averred that an angel spoke--men will have anything but God! Thunder, or cherubim, or even devils they will welcome--but Divine interpositions are irksome to them.

Many, we say, heard the third Voice. It was a Testimony to hundreds--may we not learn from this that God's Testimony to Christ is evermore a growing one? If at first He was revealed to one, then to more, then to a numerous band, expect, my Brethren, the fulfillment of that promise, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." If the glory of Jesus is today seen by thousands, it shall yet be unveiled to

tens of thousands, and in the latter days the Voice which spoke once and again to our fathers, shall so speak as to shake not only earth, but also Heaven. And in that day, if not before, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

The heavenly Testimony grows and spreads. Jesus is proclaimed as Lord in many hearts. Look not on the present littleness of His visible kingdom, despise not the day of small things. The witness of Jesus is but a spark of fire. But the conflagration thereof shall yet belt the world with holy flames. The three Testimonies were given in this wise. The first, to the greatest of men--for "among those that are born of women there was not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist." Yet the voice revealed a greater than he, whose shoelaces he was not worthy to untie.

The second was heard by the best of men--the great Lawgiver, the chief of the Prophets, and the noble of the Apostles--yet the Voice bore witness to a better than they. The third time the Voice echoed in the holiest place in the tem-ple--and there it testified to a holier than the holiest shrine. Jesus is everywhere magnified beyond all others as the only Beloved Son of the Father. I need not however enlarge. There is far more of teaching than either time or ability allow me to open up to you.

We come, in the next place, to notice to what God bore Testimony. God never sets His seal to a blank. What was it, then, which He attested? First, at the Jordan, witness was borne to Christ's miraculous origin. "This is My Beloved Son." He comes not here as the Pharisees, and soldiers, and others have done, a mere son of man. Son of man He is, but He is also Son of the infinite, eternal God. And now on His introduction to His work He receives a spiritual anointing and a

recognition from the Father. The seal was set that day to His Godhead and His relation to the Father was acknowledged.

By the second audible declaration it seems to me that the Father sealed the Son's appointment as the great Prophet, and the anointed Servant of God. For in the second Testimony these memorable words were added, "hear Him." Here God commands us to accept Him as the great Teacher, to acknowledge Him as the Head of the dispensation, to yield to Him our loyal attention and obedience. When the Lord appears, it is necessary that men should know who He is. When He is actually engaged in His work it may be needful to confirm His authority.

This was done on the Holy Mount, for so Peter understood it, as he writes in his second Epistle, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount."

The third Testimony bore witness to the success of His work. "I have both glorified My name," says the Father, "and will glorify it again."

"What," you say, "what if Jesus should not succeed? He has come into the world to vindicate the justice of God, and reveal His love, and so to glorify God--what if He should miss the mark? What, if after all His life of labor and His death of agony, He should be unsuccessful?"

The Father's Word declares that the results anticipated shall certainly be produced. "I have glorified it," says the Father--"all Your past life has glorified My name. Your coming down from Heaven, Your life of thirty years' obedience, all the works which You have done in Your three years of toil. All these have brought renown to the infinite

Majesty.

And "I will glorify it again," in the most supreme sense. Amidst the glooms of the garden, amidst the terrors of Pilate's hall, and amidst the sorrows of the Cross, I will glorify My name yet again. Yes, and in Your resurrection, in Your ascension, in Your majesty at My right hand, in Your judgment of the quick and the dead I will glorify My name again." The three Voices may be viewed as attesting the Son's Person, work, and success.

Some have thought that the three Voices attested our Lord in His threefold offices. John came proclaiming the kingdom--Jesus was in His Baptism proclaimed as the Chief of the new kingdom. On the second occasion, the Voice which

said, "Hear Him," ordained Him as the Prophet of His people. And on the third occasion Jesus was owned as a Priest. Standing in the midst of priests--in the Temple where sacrifice was offered--Himself about to offer the true sacrifice. And praying that His sacrifice might glorify God, He receives the witness that God has been glorified in Him, and will be yet again.

My Brethren, in this threefold witness receive into your hearts the Testimony of God who cannot lie. Behold your Savior, well-pleasing to His Father. Let Him be well-pleasing to you. Hear Him proclaimed as God's Beloved. O let Him be the Beloved of your hearts! Hear the Testimony born to Him that He has glorified God, and remember that His further glorifying God in some measure depends on you--for it is by your godly conversation, by your holy patience, by your zealous exertions for your Master's praise that God in Christ Jesus is to be glorified until He comes. Let these three Testimonies, as they make up a complete and conclusive code of evidence, have force upon your hearts and minds, and win you to a solemn confidence in your Lord and Master.

I shall now ask your attention to the question, How were the Testimonies given? Observe that when our Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. What if this proclaims to us that by His obedience our Lord procured the opening of Heaven for us--that our prayers might ascend to God, and all blessings might descend to us, and especially that the Holy Spirit might come down and rest forever upon the Church of God?

The Master's Baptism was the type of His death. Buried beneath the waters of Jordan, He pictured there His being buried in the deeps of agony and in the darkness of the tomb. Rising from the Jordan, He typified His resurrection. Ascending its banks He represented His Ascension into Heaven. God sees in figure all righteousness fulfilled, and answers the type by the relative type of Heaven opened and the dove descending.

Heaven was not beheld as opened when a second time the Voice was heard. In Luke 9 we read that the Voice came out of the cloud. The overshadowing cloud is a beautiful representation of the Mediatorship of Christ. He, like a glorious cloud, veils the excessive brightness of the Godhead. He shields us, so that when God speaks, He may not speak as from the top of Sinai--with a voice of trumpet and sound of thunder--but may speak through an interposing Medium, with that still, small voice of love which we can hear with delight.

Out of the cloud, my Brethren, God speaks to His people. That is to say, He speaks to us in Christ Jesus. That was a strong utterance of Luther, but it was strictly true, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," meaning I will have nothing to do with God out of Christ. If, indeed, we had to do with God out of Christ, what misery were it for us, my Brethren! We should stand in the same terror as Israel did when bounds were set about the Mount. Even Moses said, "I do

exceedingly fear and quake." It is a great mercy that the heavenly Voice, as it reaches us, comes out of the cloud.

In reading the narrative of the third Divine Testimony, our mind rests neither upon the opening of Heaven nor the cloud, but upon the Voice alone. It is as if the glory of God in the work of Christ put every other thought aside. The opening of Heaven, or the interposition of a Mediator are but means to the great end of glorifying God. O that this one great object may absorb all our souls! But, alas, the Voice, plain as it was, was misunderstood, and the clearest Revelation that God ever gave to mortals has been misunderstood by many. There will always be those who think of thunder and the so-called grandeur of nature--and others who see only angels or second causes.

Once more, consider what was it that was spoken on those three occasions. There was a difference in each case, though in the first two but slight. The first time the heavenly Voice preached the Gospel, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." The old fathers were likely to say, "Go to Jordan if you would see the Trinity," and we may add, go to Jordan if you would hear the Gospel. "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." Observe the Gospel in this sentence! The Gospel is tidings concerning a blessed Person sent of God. Such tidings the Lord here utters.

This Man rising dripping from the water. This Man is pointed out as the Hope of the world! The Gospel is never preached except where the Person of Jesus Christ is exhibited to men. "I, if I am lifted up"--not truths about Me--but "I Myself, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The attraction lies in the Person of Christ, because the real power to save lies there. We have here the Gospel revealing the acceptableness of the chosen Person with God--"My Beloved Son."

What men needed was a Savior who could stand for them before God. One

dear to the heart of God. It is good news to us that the Anointed One is well-beloved of the Father. Why, my Hearers, though I have not yet opened up the fullness of that utterance, does not Gospel light break in upon you already? Here is a Person sent of God to save--a Man of your

own race, but yet right well-beloved of God. He is so near to God as to be called His Beloved Son! But note, yet more earnestly, the Gospel of the next words, "In Whom I am well-pleased." Not, "with Whom," as hasty readers suppose, but, "In Whom I am well-pleased."

This is the very Gospel--that God, as He looks upon men is well-pleased with all who are in Christ. God in Christ is not anger, but good pleasure. If I, a poor sinner, enter by faith into Christ, then I may be assured that God is well-pleased with me--that, if I, as His child, come to Him, and by a living faith link my destiny with the life and person of Christ--I need not fear the wrath of Heaven. Sinner, God is not well-pleased with you as you are. Child of God, God is not well-pleased with you as you are--there is enough about either saint or sinner to provoke the Lord to jealousy. But, Sinner, if you are in Christ by faith, God is well-pleased with you. And, O Heir of Heaven, with all your infirmities and imperfections, since you are one with Christ by an eternal and now vital union, God is well-pleased with you! Said I not well that the Gospel sounded from Jordan's waves?

The second sound of the Voice uttered not only the Gospel itself, but the Gospel command, "Hear Him." Matthew Henry has some very delightful remarks upon this expression, "Hear Him." He remarks, in effect, that salvation does not come by seeing, as the Roman church would have it, for the disciples were not directed to behold Christ in His Glory, though the sight deserved all their attention. No, but they were bid to hear rather than see. To hear the Gospel is a most important duty, for

faith comes by hearing. Salvation comes not by hearing the doctrines of men but by hearing Jesus Christ.

There stood Moses. And those three Jewish worthies, Peter, James, and John, might have longed for Moses to open his Mouth--and had he spoken to them they would have been very attentive to Him. But the Word was not, "Hear Moses," but "Hear Him." There was Elijah, too. O for a burning word from that master among the Prophets, whose life was flame. But it was not said, "Hear Elijah," but "Hear Him." "They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them," is the word sent to careless sinners, but to sincere seekers the direction is, "Hear Him."

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the great salvation of God comes to us through the Testimony of Jesus Christ--not through the moral essays or philosophical treatises or doctrinal discussions of men. "Hear Him," the Gospel so commands you. Let not your ears be deaf when God communicates tidings of eternal life.

On the third occasion the Testimony given was not the Gospel nor the Gospel precept, but the Gospel's result--"I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." I call your attention to this that you may be earnest in preaching the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that God is glorified. By the poorest Gospel sermon that was ever preached, God, through His Holy Spirit, gets to Himself a glory which the most pompous ritual cannot yield Him. You never speak well of Jesus but what you glorify God. No Gospel Word falls to the ground and is lost. It must accomplish that for which God has sent it.

He has glorified His name by the Gospel, and He will again. Let this encourage those of you who are afraid that the times are very bad and that we are all going to the pope. Do not be at all afraid. God will glorify His name by the Gospel again as He did before. Martin Luther was not, in himself, a character so lovely that one might be

overwhelmed with admiration of him. Where, then, lay his power? His power lay in this--that he grasped the true Gospel--and he was a man who, when he grasped a thing, gave it a "grip so firm that the devil himself could not wrench it away from him.

With the Gospel in his hands he could say, "Heaps upon heaps with the weapon of the Gospel I have slain my thousands. Heaps upon heaps the foes of God are overturned." He was mighty because he declared the Gospel of Jesus Christ--and with this he shook the world and brought about the Reformation. You need not, therefore, despair.

If the ministers of Christ will only come back to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plainly, simply, and with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, we shall drive the Ritualists, those cubs of the old Roman monster, back to their dens, as our fathers did their mother of old.

Never lose your faith in the Gospel. Always believe that our power is gone when we get away from the Cross--but know also without a doubt--when we come back to the Truth as it is in Jesus, God glorifies His name.

II. LET US NOW OBSERVE ONE OR TWO INSTRUCTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES connected with these three Divine Testimonies. On each occasion Jesus was in prayer.

My dear, dear young people, look at the proofs of that in your Bibles. You will find in one or other of the Evangelists that it is distinctly stated on each occasion that our Lord was in prayer. Learn, then, that if any child of God would

have God speak comfortably to him, he must speak to God in prayer. If you would have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your soul, you must be much in supplication. Neglect not the Mercy Seat.

Notice next that each time the sufferings of Christ were prominently before Him. John, at the waters of Jordan had said, "Behold the Lamb of

God," plainly speaking of sacrifice. Baptism itself, the fulfilling of all righteousness, we have seen to be the type of His death, and of His immersion in suffering. On Tabor, on the second occasion, Matthew tells us that, "Behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

The subject that the best of men talked about when they met was the death of Jesus. No better topic, then, for us when we meet. If we were the most talented and the wisest men that ever lived, if we met together and wanted the most select topic for an eclectic discussion, we ought to choose the Cross. For Jesus, Moses, and Elijah--three great representative men--talked of the Atoning death of the great Substitute. The third time our Lord had just spoken about the hour being come in which He was to be glorified, as you well remember. Learn then, my Brethren, that if you desire to see the glory of Christ, as attested of the Father, you must dwell much on His death.

Do not talk to me about the life of Christ in all its parity, I know it and rejoice in it. But I tell you that the death of Christ, in all His misery, is the grandest point of view. The example of Jesus should be exalted by all means--but His Atonement is far grander. And you, Sirs, who take the Man Christ and offer your pretty, complimentary phrases about Him--but then turn round and deny His expiating Sacrifice--I tell you your tawdry offerings are unacceptable to Him. To be complimented by your lips is almost to be censured, for if you do not believe on Him as an Atoning Sacrifice, you do not understand His life. Thus each attestation came in connection with the Lord's sufferings, as if the glory of Christ dwelt mainly there.

Once more--each time that Jesus received this Word from the Father He was honoring the Father. In Baptism He was honoring Him by obedience.

On the mountain He was honoring Him in devotion. In the Temple the very words He was using were, "Father, glorify Your name." Oh, if you would see God's glory, and hear God's Voice in your own heart, honor Him! Spend and be spent for Him! Keep not back your sacrifices, withhold not your offerings! Lay yourselves upon His altar, and when you say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me," for any service--whatever it may be--then shall you also feel that the Lord is with you, owning both you and your works, and glorifying Himself in it.

III. Lastly, THE PRACTICAL LESSON may be found in the words, "Hear Him."

Earnestly let me speak to everyone here. God has three times with audible Voice spoken out of Heaven to bear witness to Jesus. These are historical facts. I beseech you, then, receive with assured conviction the Truth to which God bears witness. The Man of Nazareth is the Son of the Highest. The Son of Mary is the Savior appointed to bear human sin. He is the way of salvation, and the only way. Doubt not this Truth of God. Accept the Savior, for God declares that He is well-pleased in Him. Hear Him, then, with profound reverence--accept the teaching and invitations of Jesus as not the mere utterances of fallible men--but as the instructions and the loving expostulations of God.

I pray you have respect to every Word and command of Christ. Listen to Him as spirits listen to the voice of the Most High when they bow before the Truth of God. And if He says to you, as He does this morning, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," hear Him and lovingly obey the command. Hear Him, I pray you, with unconditional obedience. God attests Him as being sent from Heaven. Whatever He says to you, do it. And since He bids you believe Him, be not unbelieving. He has told us to say in His name, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Despise not that double

command. Attend, O Sinner, attend, for it is the Son of God who speaks to you! Trust and be baptized, and you shall be saved. There stands the Gospel stamped with the authority of Deity! Obey it now. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so.

Hear Him, lastly, with joyful confidence. If God has sent Jesus, trust Him. If He bears the Glory of God's Seal upon Him, joyfully receive Him. You who have trusted Him, trust Him better from this day forth. Leave your souls right confidently in the hands of Him of whom Jehovah, thrice speaking out of Heaven, declares that He is the only Savior. Receive Him, Sinner, you that would be saved! May the Lord confirm the Testimony which He spoke out of Heaven, by speaking in your hearts by His Holy Spirit, that you may rejoice in His Beloved Son, and glorify God in Him.

Chapter 2

Overwhelming Obligations

(No. 910)

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"

Psalm 116:12.

DEEP emotion prompts this question. But where are the depths of love and gratitude that can meet its exuberant demands? You will perhaps remember an incident in the life of a famous soldier, who also became a famous Christian, Colonel James Gardiner. One night he was little thinking of Divine things, but on the contrary had made an appointment of the most vicious kind. He was waiting for the appointed hour when he saw, or thought he saw before him in the room where he sat alone, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Cross.

He was impressed, as if a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, had come to him to this effect--"O sinner, I did all this for you. What have you done for me?" Some such representation as that I would put before the eyes of every person in this assembly. I earnestly pray that the vision of the Christ of God, the mercy of God, the love of God, may appear to all your eyes. And may a Voice say in your conscience, both to saint and sinner, "I did all this for you. What have you done for Me?" It will be a humiliating night probably for us all, if such should be the case--but humiliation may prove salutary--yes, the very healthiest frame of mind in which we can be found.

I. I shall first of all this evening, invite you to CAST UP A SUM IN ARITHMETIC. The text suggests this. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" Come, let us reckon up! Though I know

that the number will surpass all human numeration, let us try to reckon up His benefits toward any one of us. I wish each one of you, distinctly and severally, would now endeavor to think of the mercy of God towards yourself.

First, let us call over the roll of our temporal mercies. They are but secondary, but they are very valuable. There is a special Providence in the endowment of life to each individual creature. David did not disdain to trace back the hand of God to the hour of his nativity. And Paul adored the Grace of God that separated him from the time that his mother gave him birth. Our gratitude may, in like manner, revert to the days when we hung upon the breast. Or in the case of some, you may thank the goodness that supplied the lack of a mother's tender love. Childhood's early days might then make our thoughts busy, and our tongues vocal with praise. But here we are now. We have been preserved, some of us, these thirty or forty years. We might have been cut down and punished in our sin. We might have been swept away to the place where despair makes eternal night. But we have been kept alive in the midst of many accidents. By some marvelous godsend, death has been turned aside just as it seemed, with a straight course, to be posting toward us. When fierce diseases have been waiting round to hurry us to our last home, we have yet escaped.

Nor have we merely existed. God has been pleased to give us food, raiment, and a place where to lay our weary heads. To many here present He has given all the comforts of this life, till they can say, "My cup runs over, I have more than any heart can wish." To all here He has given enough, and though you may have passed through many straits, your bread has been given you, and your water has been sure. Is not this cause for thankfulness?

You cannot think of a shivering beggar tonight in the streets, you

cannot think of the hundreds of thousands in this unhappy country--unhappy for that reason--who have no shelter but such as the poorhouse can afford them. And no bread but such as is doled out to them as a pauper's meager pittance, without being grateful that you have been, up to now, supplied with things convenient for your sustenance, and defended from that bitter, biting penury which palls self-respect, cows industry, damps the ardor of resolution, chafes the heart, corrodes the mind, prostrates every vestige of manliness, and leaves manhood itself to be the prey of misery and the victim of despair.

More than that, we have reason tonight to be very grateful for the measure of health which we enjoy. "It is indeed a strange and awful sensation to be suddenly reduced by the unnerving hand of sickness to the feebleness of infancy. For giant strength to lie prostrate, and busy activity to be chained to the weary bed." Oh, when the bones begin to ache, and sinews and tissues seem to be but roads for pain to travel on, then we thank God for even a moment's rest. Do you not know what it is to toss to and fro in the night and wish for the day, and when the daylight has come, to pine for the night?

If there has been an interval of relief, just a little lull in the torture and the pain, how grateful you have been for it! Shall we not be thankful for health, then, and specially so for a long continuance of it? You strong men that hardly know what sickness means, if you could be made to walk the wards of the hospital and see where there have been broken bones, where there are disorders that depress the system, maladies incurable, pangs that rack and convulse the frame, and pains all but unbearable, you would think, I hope, that you had cause enough for gratitude.

Not far off this spot there stands a dome--I thank God for the

existence of the place of which it forms a part--but I can never look at it. I hope I never shall, without lifting up my heart in thanks to God that my reason is spared. It is no small unhappiness to be bereft of our faculties, to have the mind swept to and fro in hurricanes of desperate, raging madness, or to be victims of hallucinations that shut you out from all usefulness, and even companionship with your fellow men. That you are not in St. Luke's or Bedlam tonight should be a cause for thankfulness to Almighty God.

But why do I enlarge here? Consider to what pains the human body may be subjected. Imagine what ills may come upon humanity. Conceive what distress, what woe, what anguish, we are all capable of bearing--and then in proportion as you have been secured from all these, and in proportion on the other hand as you have been blessed with comforts and enjoyments--"let each generous impulse of your nature warm into ecstasy." And then ask yourselves the question, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward us?" Cast up the sum, and then draw a line and ask what is due to God for even these common gifts of Providence.

But, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you who have something better than this life to rest upon, I touch a higher and a sweeter string--a chord which ought to tremble with a nobler melody, when I say to you--think of the spiritual blessings which you have received! It is not very long ago that you were in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. We look back but for a little while, some of us, and we were under the bondage of the Law. We had been awakened, and we felt the load and the guilt of sin--a grievous burden from which we feared we never could escape--a flagrant defilement from which we knew no means of cleansing.

Do not I remember well my fruitless prayers, my tears that were my meat

both day and night, my grief of heart! They cut me to the quick, and I found no kind of deliverance! How I sought the Lord then! How I cried for mercy, but I found none! I was shut up and could not come forth. I was delivered up to fear, and doubt, and despair. Bless the Lord, it is over now! Blessed be the name of God, my soul has escaped like a bird out of the net! And this night, instead of talking of sin as a thing unpardonable, I can stand here and say for you, as well as myself, that He has put away all our iniquity, and cast our transgressions into the depths of the sea!

If He had never done anything for us but that, it seems to me that we should be bound forever and forever to extol His name with as much exultation as Miriam and Moses felt, when Miriam took the timbrel, and Moses wrote the song, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He cast into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation."

Not indeed, Beloved, that forgiven sin was the total. It was but an item, the beginning of His tender mercies towards us. For after that He comforted us like as a mother comforts her children. He bound up every wound. He removed every blot. He covered us with a robe of righteousness and decked us with the jewels of the Spirit's Graces. He adopted us into His family, even we who were aliens by nature, foes by long habit, rebels and traitors by our revolt against His government.

He made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. All the privileges of sonship, which never would have been ours by nature, have been secured to us by regeneration, and by adoption. All His benefits!

If these were all, oh, what should we render unto Him who is the Author and Giver of such inestimable blessings? All His benefits! How could we estimate their value, even if we had to stop here? Mark you, they are benefits, indeed, not merely the kind intent of benevolence, or good

wishes, which may or may not be of real service to us. But verily the saving effect of beneficence, or good deeds accomplished for us--the full advantage of which we have richly to enjoy.

There is a vexatious uncertainty about all human philanthropy. How weak it often is, expending strength for nothing, and failing to mature its best projects! Though the physician should exhaust the resources of medical science while he spares no pains in watching his patient, that patient may die. Though the advocate pleads for his client with intense fer-

vor, cogent reasoning, and a torrent of eloquence, that client may yet lose his cause. Though the general of an army command the troops ever so skillfully, and fight against the enemy ever so bravely, the battle may yet be lost.

The heroic volunteer who assays to rescue a drowning man may fail in the endeavor and lose his own life in the attempt. The valiant crew that man the lifeboat may not succeed in bringing the shipwrecked to shore. The best aims may miscarry. Kindness, like ore of gold in the breast of the creature, may never be minted into the coin of benefit, or pass current for its real worth. Not all donations expended in charity are effectual to relieve distress. But the benefits of God are all fully beneficial. They answer the ends they are designed to serve. Forgetfulness on the part of God's children is without excuse, for here we are, monuments of mercy, pillars of Grace, living Epistles--yes, the living, the living to praise You, O God, as I do this day. And thus beholden to the Lord for all His benefits, I feel that my thoughts and actions of adoring gratitude should break forth, restrained by no shore, but be continually overflowing every embankment that custom has thrown up, and send out in tears of love and sweat of labor, fertilizing streams on the right hand and on the left.

All His benefits! Ring that note again. His benefits are so many, so various, so minute, that they often escape our observation while they exactly meet our wants. True it is, the Lord has done great things for us which may well challenge the admiration of angels. But true it also is that He has done little things for us, and bestowed attention upon all our tiny needs and our childish cares and anxieties. As we turn over the leaves of our diary, we are lost in wonder at the keenness of that vision and the extent of that knowledge whereby even the hairs of our head are all numbered .

O God, what infinite tenderness, what boundless compassion You have shown to us! You have continued to forgive our offenses--You have perpetually upheld us in the hour of temptation. What comforts have delighted our soul in the times of trouble! What gentle admonitions have brought us back in the times of our going astray! We have had preserving mercies, sustaining mercies, enriching mercies, sanctifying mercies. Who shall count the small dust of the favors and bounties of the Lord?

My dear Brethren, it is no small benefit that God has conferred upon some of us that we are members of a happy Church on earth--that we are united together in the bonds of love. I know some of you used to be members of other Churches where there were periodic conflicts, and you are glad enough that you have come with a loving and happy people where you can serve the Lord to your heart's content. By His Grace you meet with warm-hearted fellow Christians who bid you Godspeed. My heart exults in the thought of all the prosperity we have enjoyed in this place. The Lord's name be praised! Even as a Church, over and above the mercies which have come to us as private Christians, I would say--and I would invite you to join me in saying--"What shall we render to the Lord for all His benefits toward us?"

But, Beloved, we have only begun the list of those mercies that we strive in vain to enumerate. We shall not try to finish it, for blessed be God, it never will be finished. He has given us Himself to be our portion. He has given us His Providence to be our guardian. He has given us His promises to be the vouchers of our inheritance. We shall not die, though we must sleep, unless the Lord first comes. Yet we shall sleep in Jesus! Our bones and ashes shall be watched over and preserved until the Resurrection trumpet shall summon them by its voice, and our bodies shall be reanimated by Divine power.

For our souls, we have the sure and certain hope that we shall be with Christ where He is, that we may behold His glory. We are looking forward to the blessed day when He shall say to us, "Come up higher," and from the lower room of the feast we shall ascend into the upper chamber, nearer to the King, to sit at His right hand and feast forever. Oh, the depths of His mercy! Oh, the heights of His loving kindness! Faithfulness has followed us. Not a promise has been broken. Not one good thing has failed us!

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters, what have I just given you but a sort of general outline of the mercies the Lord has bestowed on us, and the benefits we have received at His hand? If each one would try to fill that outline up, by the rehearsal of his own case, and the life story of his own experience, how much glory God might get from this assembly tonight! Your case is different from mine in the incidents that compose it. I believe mine is different from any of yours-- but this I know--there is not a man in this place that owes more to God than I do. There is not one here that ought to be more grateful. There cannot be one that is more indebted to the goodness of the Lord than I am for every step of the pilgrimage that I have trod, from the first day even until now. I can, no, I must speak well of His name.

Truly God is good, and I have found Him so. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him." I have proved Him so. Well, I know all your tongues are itching to say the same. You feel that though He has led you through deep waters, and through fiery trials, and sometimes chastened you very severely, He has not given you over to death. He has dealt with you as a father with His son whom He loves, and been to you as a Friend that never forsakes.

You would not breathe half a word against His blessed name. Rather you would say, to borrow an expression which Rutherford constantly used, that you are, "drowned debtors to God's mercy." He meant that he was over head and ears in debt to God--he could not tell how deep his obligations were, so he just called himself, "a drowned debtor" to the loving kindness and the mercy of his God. Well, there is a sum for you. If you want to use your arithmetical faculties, sit down when you can get an hour's quiet, and try to identify all the precious thoughts of God towards you--all His benefits.

II. Our second point shall be A CALCULATION OF THE GRATITUDE WHICH IS DUE TO GOD FOR ALL THIS. I should like to make each man his own assessor tonight, to assess the income of mercy which he has received, and put down what should be the tribute of gratitude which he should return to the revenue of the great King. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?"

Calculate, for a minute, what we owe to God the Father, and what we ought to render Him for the debt. As many as have believed in Christ were chosen of God the Father from before all worlds. He might have left them unchosen. It was His own absolute good pleasure which wrote them in the roll of the elect. He has chosen you, my Brothers and

Sisters, that you should be holy, that you should be His children, that you should be made like your elder Brother, Christ Jesus. And because He chose you to this, to this you shall come--though all the powers of earth and Hell should withstand-- for the Divine decree abides immutably steadfast and shall surely be fulfilled.

You are God's favorite one, His child, ordained to dwell forever in eternal bliss. What shall we render for this? O let the thought just stir the depths of your soul a minute, if indeed it is so, that the seal of the Everlasting Covenant has been set upon you! Before the sun began to shine, or the moon to march in her courses, God did choose me, in whom there was nothing to engross His love--nothing to attract His favor. O my God, if it is so, that I, of all the sons of Adam, should be made a distinguishing object of Your Grace, and the subject of Your discriminating favor, take me. Take my body, take my soul, take my spirit, take my goods, my talents, my faculties--take all I have, and all I am, and all I ever hope to be--for I am Yours. You have loosed my bonds, but Your mercy has bound me to Your service forever.

Now think for a minute of what you owe to God the Son, to Jesus Christ. I mean as many of you as have believed on Him. Think for a moment on the habitation of the highest Glory, and consider how Jesus left His Father's Throne, deserted the courts of angels, and came down below to robe Himself in an infant's clay. There contemplate Him living in our nature. See Him after He has grown up, leading a life of toil and pain, bearing our sicknesses, and carrying our sorrows. Let your eyes look straight into the face of the Man who was acquainted with grief.

I shall not ask you to trace all His footsteps, but I would bid you come to that famous garden, where in the dead of the night He knelt and prayed, until in agony, He sweat drops of blood. It was for you, for you, Believer, that there the bloody sweat fell to the ground! You see

Him rise up. He is betrayed by His friend. For you the betrayal was endured. He is taken. He is led off to Pilate. They falsely accuse Him. They spit in His face. They crown Him with thorns. They put a mock scepter of reed into His hands--for you all that ignominy was endured! For you, especially and particularly, the Lord of Glory passed through these cruel mockings.

See Him as He bears His Cross--His shoulders are bleeding from the recent lashes. See Him, as along the Via Dolo-rosa He sustains the cruel load. He bears that Cross for you. Your sins are laid on His shoulders and make that Cross more heavy than had it been made of iron. See Him on the Cross, lifted up between Heaven and earth, a spectacle of grievous woe. Hear Him cry, "I thirst!" And hear His cry more bitter, still, while Heaven and earth are startled by it, "Why have You forsaken Me, My God, My God?"

He is enduring all those griefs for you. For you the thirst and the fainting, the nakedness and the agony. For you the bowing of the head, the yielding up the ghost, the slumber in the cold and silent tomb. For you His resurrection when He rises in the glory of His might, and for you afterwards the ascension into Heaven, when they sing, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors." For you His constant pleading at the right hand of the Father. Yes, all for YOU, and what should be done for Him?

What tribute shall we lay at the pierced feet? What present shall we put into that nailed hand? Where are kisses that shall be sweet enough for His dear wounds? Where is adoration that shall be reverent enough for His blessed and exalted Person? Daughters of music, bring your sweetest songs! You men of wealth, bring Him your treasures. You men of fame and learning, come lay your laurels at His feet. Let us all bring all that we have, for such a Christ as this deserves more than all.

What shall we render, Christ of God, to You for all Your benefits towards us?

Let me ask you to think for a moment on the third Person of the blessed Godhead, namely, the Holy Spirit. Let us never forget that when we were like filthy rags His hand touched us. When we were like corrupt and rotten carcasses in the graves of sin, His breath quickened us. It was His hand that led us to the Cross. It was His fingers that took the film from our eyes. It was His eye salve that illuminated us that we should look to Jesus and live. Since that hour the blessed Spirit has lived in our hearts. Oh, what a dreadful place, I was about to say, for God to dwell in! But the Holy Spirit has never utterly left us. We have grieved Him. We have oftentimes vexed Him--but still He is here, still resident within the soul, never departing--being Himself the very life of the living incorruptible seed that abides forever.

My dear Friends, how often the Holy Spirit has comforted you! How very frequently in your calm moments has He revealed Christ to you! How often has the blessed Truth been laid home to you with a Divine savor which it never could have had, if it had not been for Him! He is God, and the angels worship Him, and yet He has come into the closest possible contact with you. Christ was Incarnate, and the flesh in which He was Incarnate was pure and perfect. The Holy Spirit was not incarnate, but still He comes to dwell in the bodies of His saints--bodies still impure, still unholy.

Oh, what Grace and condescension is this! You blessed Dove, You dear Comforter, You kind Lover of the fallen sons of men--Your condescension is matchless! We love You even as we love Christ Himself, and this night if we ask the question, "What shall we render unto the Lord, the Holy Spirit, for all His benefits towards us?" we know not how to answer, but can only say, "Take us, take us, Holy Spirit. Use us. Fill

us with Yourself. Sanctify us to Your holiest purposes. Use us right up--make us living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God--for it is our reasonable service."

Now perhaps, by God's Spirit, the text may come a little more vividly before your minds. You have had another opportunity of adding up all the benefits of God--another opportunity, dear Brothers and Sisters, of calculating what you ought to do. Give heed, then, for I intend to come, in closing, to be very personal and practical. I wish to speak very pointedly to you as individuals--but there are so many of you that some are sure to slip away in the crowd. I half wish I were in the position of the preacher who had but one hearer, and addressed him as, "Dearly Beloved Roger."

I want to put the question of my text as though only one person were here, and that one person, yourself. "What shall I render to the Lord?" Never mind your neighbor, your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, or anybody else just now. If you are a saved soul, the question for you is, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" "What shall I render?" Suppose, dear Friend, you had been the woman bowed with an infirmity for so many years, and Christ had loosed you, and you had stood upright tonight? What would you render? Well, you HAVE been loosed from your infirmity--a much worse decrepitude than the physical ailment she was released from! Suppose you had been poor blind Bartimeus sitting by the wayside begging, born blind, and you had your sight given you tonight? What would you render? But you HAVE had such a gift bestowed on you. You were in spiritual blindness--worse than that which is only natural--and Christ has opened your eyes! What will you render? Suppose you had been Lazarus, and had been in the grave so long that you began to be corrupt, and Christ had raised you to life? What would you render? Well, you HAVE been

quickened when you were dead in sin. You were corrupt. You were buried in darkness and in sin. But you can say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave."

Now what will you render to Him? Suppose He stood on this platform tonight, and instead of this poor voice, and these unclean lips, the voice of the Well-Beloved should speak in music to you? And the lips that are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh could talk to each of you? What would you render to Him, then? Well, do the same as though He were here, for He sees you! Yes, and His Spirit, hovering over this assembly, will accept the tribute you give as though He were here in the flesh--or otherwise He will grieve over you and resent the neglect of your heart. Think of Him as being here, and render unto Him as though He were visibly and audibly in our midst.

What will you render? Let me ask you, dearly Beloved, whether you have ever thought of what men and women can render. You may have read the lives, I hope you have, of Mr. and Mrs. Judson in Burma, ready to sacrifice all for Christ. Or the lives of our martyrs, in Foxe's Martyrology, who rejoiced if they might burn for Christ. We still have some men

and women among us--I wish there were more whose lives of consecration tell you what men can be and do. Are you anything like they are? If not, while they are not what they ought to be, and they fall short of the Master's image, how far short must you be? Oh, I pray you are grieved that it is so, and press the question upon yourselves the more, What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

A side question may help you. What have you rendered? You are getting old now, or at least you are getting to the prime of life. What have you done for Christ up to this time? Come, look. Look back now, I must urge you to do it. Converted late perhaps, or if converted young, it

matters not, still the question must come--What have you done up to now? Oh, I dare not answer the question myself--yet I am not in that respect the worst here--I dare not look back upon my past life of service for God with anything like satisfaction. After having done all that we could do, we are but unprofitable servants. We have not done what was our duty. There is no man here, I fear, who can answer the question, "What have I rendered?" with any self-contentment. We must all drop a tear, feel abashed, and say, "Good Lord, let not the future be as barren as the past, but by Your mercy help us to a better and a nobler sort of living!"

May I ask you, as it may assist in answering the question, how old you are? Some of you tell me that you are far advanced in age. Then what must you render in the few years you can have to live? Live hard, Beloved, live hard--live fast in a spiritual sense, for you have little time to use, none to waste. Get as much done as can be done for your dear Lord, before He calls you to His face. You are young, others of you tell me. Oh, then with such a long opportunity as God may give you, you ought to be diligent every moment! If you are not diligent now in your early days, there is no likelihood that you will be afterwards. Since you have the special and peculiar advantage of early piety, O render to the Lord the more, because He has opened before you a wider field, and given you more time to cultivate it than full many of His people have known.

Let me ask you, again, What are your capacities? That, perhaps, will help you to answer the question. "Oh," says one, "I cannot do much." Well then, my dear Friend, do the little you can. Do it all--do it up to the very point--do not leave an inch untouched. If you can only do a little, do all of that, and do it heartily. And keep at it till you die. Says another, "Perhaps God has entrusted some talents to me." Then

He expects a great deal from the employment of them. O do not let your talents lie idle! Your talents are not meant for your gain, nor merely to serve the world. They are meant to serve your God, who has redeemed you with the precious blood of Jesus. Take care, whether you have much or little, to give Him all.

I will put another question to you that may stir your mettle. How did you serve Satan before you were converted? What rare boys some of you were--not sparing body or soul to enjoy the pleasures of sin. Oh, with what zest, with what fervor and force and vehemence did many of you dance to the tune of the devil's music! I wish you would serve God half as well as some of the devil's servants serve him. What? Now you have a new Friend, a new Lover, a new Husband--shall He ever look you in the face and say, "You do not love Me so well as the old. You do not serve Me so zealously"? Shall Jesus Christ say to any man or woman among us, "You do not love Me so well as you did love the world. You were never weary of serving the world, but you do soon get weary of serving Me"? O my poor Heart, wake up! Wake up! What are you doing, to have served sin at such a rate, and then to serve Christ so little?

Another question may be to the point. How do you serve yourselves? You are in business, some of you, and I like to see a man of business with his hands full and his wits about him. Your drones, those indolent fellows who go about the shop half asleep, and seem as if they never did wake up, what is the use of them? Men who seem to cumber the earth, men who never did see a snail unless they happened to meet one, for they could not have overtaken it, they travel so slowly-- such men are or little use to God or man. I know that the most of you are diligent in business. You never hear the ring of a guinea without being on the alert to earn it if possible.

Your coats are off, and very likely your shirtsleeves are turned up

when there is a chance of driving trade. That I commend. But oh, do let us have something like it in the service of Jesus Christ! Do not let us be drudging in the world, and drawling in the Church--lively in the service of mammon, and then laggard in the service of Christ! Heart and soul, manliness, vigor, vehemence--let the utmost strain of all our powers be put forth in the service of Him who was never prone to be slow in the service of our souls when they had to be redeemed.

I shall not keep you much longer, but still pressing the same question, let me ask you, dear Friends, how do you think such service as you have rendered will look when you come to see it by the light of eternity? Oh, nothing of life will

be worth having lived, when we come to die, except that part of it which was devoted and consecrated to Christ. Live, then, with your deathbeds in immediate prospect. Live in the light of the next world so your pulse will be quickened, and your heart excited in the Master's service.

I now put the question, What shall we render? What shall I render unto the Lord? Let the question go all round the pews, and let everybody answer, What shall I render? Is there any new thing I can do for Christ that I never did before? Cannot I speak a word for Christ to somebody tonight? Tonight, because you cannot overtake the loss of a single opportunity. Tomorrow's mercies will bring tomorrow's obligations. Today's obligations must be discharged today. What shall I render tonight? Is there anybody I can speak to of Jesus before I retire to my chamber? It is a little thing, but let me do it! What shall I render?

Let me give my God praise tonight somehow.

There is the communion table around which we are about to gather. That may help me to render Him some homage. I will there take the cup of salvation, and call upon His name. Tomorrow I shall be in the world

going forth to my labors. What shall I render? I will consecrate part of my substance to God, but I will try to consecrate all tomorrow and next day to Him. While I am at my work, if I use a saw, or use a hammer, or if I stand at a counter, or in the fields, or in the streets I will ask that my thoughts may be on God--that I may be kept from sin, and that by my example I may render some tribute of honor to His name in the sight of my fellow men. And I will try to seize every opportunity that comes in my way of telling--

"To sinner round,
What a dear Savior I have found."

And yet, dear Friends, it is not for me to answer the question that is propounded for you. With these few brief hints I do put the question in all its touching pathos, in all its deep solemnity, in all its momentous gravity, before every Christian man and woman here--and I cite you to answer it before the Searcher of all hearts--"What shall I render?" Thrice happy you who respond in lip and life to the urgent call! "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which you have showed toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end that you are not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

As for those of you, my Hearers, who are not yet converted--you who are not saved--this is not the question for you. Your question is, "What must I do to be saved?" and the answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." O believe on Him tonight! Trust Him--that is the point--trust Jesus Christ. You may come to Him and be saved at once. Then, not till then, you will begin to serve Him. May God bless you, my dear Friends, every one of you, for Christ's sake.

Chapter 3

The Putting Away Of Sin

(No. 911)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 16, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put a way sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Hebrews 9:26.

WHEN the old dispensation was becoming worn out, and like a vesture ready to be laid aside. When the end of the typical twilight had come, then Jesus Christ came forth from the Father and brought the dawning with Him. When the often appearing of the Aaronic priests had not availed for the putting away of sin, He came whose once appearing perfected the work. As it was said to the master of the feast, "You have kept the best wine until now," so might it be said of the great God of Grace, whose crowning gift to man came late, but not too late, to enrich the banquet of His love. There was a fullness of time before which the Messiah could not be cut off, but when that hour was come He was not slow with His sacrifice--He appeared in the appointed place to make Atonement for human guilt.

We have, this morning, to proclaim in the hearing of this congregation an old Truth of God to which you have listened many and many a time. But it is a Truth which should be and will be exceedingly delightful to all those whose consciences are troubled with sin. If there are any here who are conscious of the burden of their past guilt, are quickened so as to be sensitive of the curse, can hear the rolling thunder of the impending wrath of God--to them it will be a great joy to hear of One who can put away sin! It is for such as you are that the great Redeemer

in the end of the world came among men.

He could not come to put away sin from those who had none, or from those who by their own efforts could put that sin away from themselves. It is, then, for such as you are who are hopelessly sinful. Hopelessly so, I say, if viewed from any aspect short of the work of Jesus Christ. It is for such as you that He has come. If your house were on fire you would rejoice to hear the fire engines coming down the street, for you would feel an absolute certainty that they were coming to you--because your house was in a blaze--if no one's else might be.

If there were appointed, today, a commissioner for the relief of such traders as might be in difficulties, whose capital was little, and whose liabilities were great--if you were in that condition you would feel at once that a hope was held out to you--because the commissioner's office supposes a condition of circumstances in which you are found. The news of Christ's coming into the world to put away sin sounds like the joy blasts of the silver trumpets of Jubilee to those who know themselves to be full of sin, who desire to have it put away, who are conscious that they cannot remove it themselves, and are alarmed at the fate which awaits them if the sin is not by some means blotted out.

Listen, you anxious ones, and if there are no charms of eloquence about the speaker, and if he seeks out no gaudy words that might draw attention to himself, yet let the theme, so suitable to you, so necessary to you, chain your ear and win your heart! And may God the Holy Spirit make the preaching of Christ to you to be the opening of the prisons to them that are bound.

There is one thing in the text which should be sure to hold, as though spell-bound, the attention of every trembling sinner. It is this--the Christ of God, who in the end of the world has appeared, did not come

to deny the fact of human sin--to propagate a philosophy which might make sin appear harmless, or define it as a mere mistake, perhaps a calamity, but by no means a Hell-deserving crime. I am sure that every sensitive conscience would loathe such teaching. It could yield no comfort whatever to a soul which had felt sin to be exceedingly sinful. Jesus Christ did not come into the world to help you to forget your sin. He has not come to furnish you with a cloak with which to cover it. He has not appeared that He may so strengthen your minds, (as men would have it), that you may learn to laugh at your iniquities and defy the consequences of them. For no such reason came the Son of Man. He has

come not to lull you into a false peace, not to whisper consolation which would turn out to be delusive in the end, but to give you a real deliverance from sin by putting it away and so to bring you a true peace in which you may safely indulge.

If sin is put away, then peace is lawful. Then rest of spirit becomes not only a blessing which we may enjoy, but which we must enjoy, and which, the more we shall enjoy the better shall we please our God. O Sinner, the tidings that I bring you this morning are not the mere glitter of a hope that shall delude, not a present relief for the woe you feel, but a real cure for all your ills, a sure and certain deliverance from all the danger that now hangs over you!

I. We will proceed at once, then, to deal with our glorious text, and at the outset let us remember that IT IS A VERY HARD THING TO PUT AWAY SIN. Meditate awhile upon this Truth of God, for it will help you to magnify the power, the wisdom, and the Grace of Christ who has put it away. It is a very hard thing to put away sin, all the Jewish sacrifices could not do it. They were very costly--sometimes thousands of bullocks were slaughtered. They were ordained of God Himself.

In the tabernacle everything was done according to the pattern seen in the Holy Mount by Moses. In the Temple no sacrifice was presented but according to Divine command. The whole Aaronic ritual was very impressive. The priests in their holy robes, pure white linen garments, the golden altar, candlesticks, and table, the fire, the smoke, the incense. The whole thing was calculated very much to impress the mind. The first Covenant provided a very magnificent service, such as never will be excelled, but for all that--costly, Divinely arranged, impressive--it could not put away sin. And the evidence of this is found in the fact that after one Day of Atonement they needed another atonement next year.

Now, if sin had been put away, there would have been an end of sin-offering. There is an end of paying when the debt is discharged--an end of punishment when penalty is fulfilled. There is an end of propitiation when God is satisfied. Why need the fuller cleanse the garment if it is already immaculately white? Why need the refiner cast on fresh fuel if the gold is already rid of all alloy? What need, then, of a further sacrifice for sin if sin is effectually removed?

My Brethren, sin was still there. After all the sin-offerings it was not washed away, and such men as David felt this when they cried, "You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: you delight not in burnt offering." Here were thousands of years, then, of the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats according to Divine command, and yet sin still remained, for its removal was a harder thing to achieve than the blood of bulls and goats could compass. Nor could sin be put away by ceremonies. There were those in our Lord's days who, not content with doing what God had commanded, invented rites and ceremonies of their own, or carried out those commanded in a manner never intended by God. These men practiced washings of all kinds. They fasted and genuflected.

They broadened the borders of their garments. They wore phylacteries, they paid tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and so on--and hoped, by carrying out these minutiae and by adding to the traditions of the fathers obediently observed--they might succeed in getting up a righteousness which should cover their sin. But our Lord expressly tells us that this was a complete failure, for though they succeeded in making clean the outside of the cup and the platter, their inward parts were very wickedness. And while they were as outwardly clean as sepulchers that had been newly white-washed, yet their inward parts were full of rottenness. There had been no cleansing of themselves by all that they had done.

And it is so now, my dear Hearers--no outward forms can make you clean. The leprosy of sin lies deep within. Not even rites that God has given--I repeat it--not even rites that God has given, can avail, however reverently observed, to remove so much as one single sin. More than this, repentance itself cannot purge a man from sin. If anything could do it, surely this might. Let me not be mistaken--wherever God gives real repentance of sin, there sin is forgiven--for repentance and remission go together. But no man is pardoned because of any merit in his repentance. Repentance is a gift given to us graciously at the same time as remission of sins, but it is not the cause of remission. It comes with it, and is one of the outward evidences of it, but it is by no means the cause of it.

Now observe the proof of this in the case of David. David was as penitent as a man could well be. His Penitential Psalms remain forever the most wonderful expressions of a broken heart, yet David nowhere claims forgiveness because of his contrition. Take the fifty-first Psalm as a specimen. David nowhere concludes that he is forgiven because he repents, or that his tears can wash him white. His petition

is, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean"--alluding to the sacrificial blood which was sprinkled by a piece of hyssop. "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Nothing about, "/ have washed my couch with tears, and therefore I am whiter than snow. I have made my bed to swim with my heart-sorrow for my transgression, and therefore I am pure." His remorse was very acute, but he never

rests on that. He looks to the hyssop. He turns himself to the sacred Fountain of the atoning blood, and there he hopes for cleansing. Ah, dear Hearer, and so must you!--

"Could your tears forever flow, Could your grief no respite know, All for sin could not atone-- Christ must save, and Christ alone."

Be it also known that no form of suffering in this world can put away sin. There is a notion, especially among the poorer classes of London, based very much upon a mistaken interpretation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that in the next world those who have been very poor, and have suffered a great deal, will as a sort of recompense be taken up to Heaven--while the rich, simply because they were rich, will be sent down to Hell. Such was by no means the teaching of Christ! It is as wide as the poles asunder from His meaning.

No, my dear Hearer, you might be as poor as Lazarus, you might even lie as he did on the dunghill with the hounds to lick your wounds--but this would not win you a place in Heaven. Your sufferings here by no means make an atonement for sin. You remember that man who suffered more in body and in estate than any other man that we have ever read of? I mean Job. You remember how all his children were taken away at a stroke? How his property was all destroyed? How he then found himself covered from head to foot with a horrible disease?

It was a disease so dreadful that he could not sit in the house, and he

betook himself to a dunghill, and laid hold upon a piece of a pot to scrape himself with. Now after he had passed through all that misery and a great deal more, what was his condition? God appeared to him in a whirlwind, and spoke to him--do you find that Job, because of his sufferings stood up before the Lord, and said, "I have suffered all this, and am now clear of all sin"? No, no! He cried in great humility, "I abhor myself in dust and ashes." His sufferings had not made him meritorious. He did not claim anything of the kind, but in the Presence of the Most High he abhorred himself, he humbled himself into the very dust.

His confidence was not placed in himself, but in the Savior, for you hear him say, "I know that my Redeemer lives." His hope looked to the Redeemer, and not to the sufferings which he had himself endured. Believe me then, my Friend, you may carry many grievous diseases about you, and endure great poverty and all kinds of afflictions--you might even torture yourself as Romanists and idolaters do--but all that will be of no service to you in the matter of Divine forgiveness. Sin is not to be put away by anything of this sort.

Nor, my dear Friends, can any form of self-denial, however terrible it might be, put away sin. Some have fancied that when they have repented of sin after a sort, and forsaken it, that then by denying their bodies, by enduring much physical suffering, they might make atonement. But it is not so. You remember how the Prophet asks what man shall give that he may be accepted with God. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

That last question reaches far into the realm of self-sacrifice. "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Yet even this would be of no avail. We read of fathers and mothers in heathen countries who give their children up to idols. Our hearts are shocked by the story of Moloch--believed to have been a huge image of hollow brass in which a great fire was lighted until it became red hot--and then parents brought their first-born babes and placed them in the red hot arms of this God--that they might there be consumed to ashes. I say when you hear of this, you think what cruel monsters they must have been!

Ah, it was not so! Many of those fathers were as loving to their children as you are, and the mothers as affectionate as mothers now present. But they felt an awful sense of sin and believed that this would please God and put away sin. Therefore doing violence to all that was affectionate and tender within their nature, they gave the fruit of their body for the sins of their soul. And what a thought it is that when they had performed this hideous self-denial and made themselves wretched for life, desolating their family hearth by giving up their dearest ones to die--still no sin had been put away even then, not one! The spot remained indelible though washed with the blood of their own child. No, my Hearer, sin is not easily put away.

It may impress our minds if we remember further that holy living does not put away past sin. If from this day forth we should live after the commandments of the Law blamelessly, and walk before the Lord with all devotion, and before men with all uprightness, yet it would not put away past sin. And the proof of this is to be found in the fact that those

men who have lived after the best fashion, undoubtedly the best men in the world, have declared that their consciences were not satisfied with

themselves, and that until they looked away from themselves they did not experience anything like satisfaction.

More memorable, still is the fact that death does not put away sin. Death puts away a great deal. A man dies, and if he has no estate his debts die with him. And many a hard thought that we had of our fellow man we bury in his tomb. But death never kills a single sin. Sin is immortal until the immortal Christ comes to deal with it. Sin stands like the everlasting hills and will not move from its place till He that made Heaven and earth casts the mountain into the sea of His Atonement. No, the rich man died and was buried, but no sin of his was buried, for in Hell he lifted up his eyes, and his sins were there to torture and to condemn him.

Another thought is equally solemn--namely, that Hell itself cannot put away sin. There are the devil and his angels for whom Hell was made, for whom the fire was first kindled, and its pit first dug. But they are as great sinners after these six thousand years as they were when first they were cast down from Heaven. And so those lost ones whose spirits have been in Hell since the time of Noah's flood--they are still sinners--and after all the ages of suffering they have endured not a sin less is upon them now than there was at first. Ah, dreadful thought! If you and I are ever cast into Hell, though ages on ages may lapse and the wrath of God is poured out upon us to the uttermost, there will never be the destruction of a single sin or particle of a sin by it all.

Sin cannot be put away until the penalty is borne to the end, and that can never be by finite man. What a work was here, then, for the only begotten Son of God to do! Speak of the labors of Hercules! They were nothing compared with the labors of Emmanuel. Speak of miracles! To tread the sea, to hush the billows, to heal the sick, to raise the

dead-- these are all bright stars--but their light is hid when compared with this miracle of miracles--when the Sun of Christ's righteousness arises with healing beneath His wings, and thick clouds of sin are put away by Him. Think of the difficulty, then, and adore the Christ who accomplished the task.

Before I leave this point I beseech each one here to consider the difficulty of putting away sin in his own case. In any case difficult enough, in mine, in yours, my Brethren, how peculiarly so! Our sins trail their horrid length from side to side for many years. Our sins are aggravated, they are piled-up sins. Ours are sins against light and knowledge, against conscience, against vows and resolution. Our sins are sins repeated after we had tasted of their bitterness--foul sins, sins it may be of the sort which bring the blush to the cheek--sins that made us toss on our beds as we remembered them with dread, and yet sins that we returned to as the dog returns to its vomit. Oh, our monster sins! Our horrible sins! Our damnable sins! There was a difficulty, indeed, in putting these away. May you feel this deeply in your hearts, and you will be the more heartily ready to appreciate our next doctrine.

II. The second great Truth is one that is full of joy, namely, that Christ HAS PUT AWAY THE SIN OF ALL HIS PEOPLE. You notice that the word "sin" is in the singular, and for that reason, standing as it does, alone, without a qualifying word, it is the more comprehensive. Sin is regarded as one great evil, and Christ has put it away. When the Lord Jesus Christ appeared at the end of the world, all the sins of His people were made to meet in one tremendous mass. Jesus Christ suffered all this to be imputed to Him. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity"--as if it were but one-- "the iniquity of us all."

There it was, and He was accounted as if He had committed it all. In

Gethsemane, and on the Cross He endured the penalty due for all the sin of His people, or rather the death which God had stipulated should stand as an equivalent for the sufferings of all the guilty ones for whom He stood. He suffered all that--and by that suffering He put away the sin, the whole mass, the whole mountainous mass of the sin of all those for whom He stood as a Substitute--and for whom He suffered the penalty. Sin was completely put away, everlastingly put away, when Jesus gave up the ghost, rose from the dead, and entered into His Glory.

I beg you to notice the expression used by our translators. The expression in the Greek is more forcible, and I will deal with that directly. He has "put away" sin. This phrase in the English version is used in reference to an unfaithful wife when she was "put away." Her husband gave her a bill of divorcement, and she was no longer his. Until that deed of divorcement was made she was his lawful wife, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, and under the Law they were regarded as one--their property and estate one. But as soon as ever a lawful divorce was given, she had no relation to him any more than any other woman. She was utterly disowned, she had no further claim on him whatever. The separation was complete.

Now, sin before Christ comes, is, as it were, married to us. The foul thing pollutes us. For its filthiness we are responsible, we have committed it. It is linked with us so as to be, as it were, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. But, oh, the blessedness of the fact! Christ has proclaimed an everlasting divorce between our souls and our sins! He has put our sins away so that we are no longer knit to them, and their dread responsibility lies no longer upon us. He stands to bear the responsibility of our sin on our behalf, and our personal liabilities cease.

Be they what they may, they are not charged on us. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." He had iniquity, but it is no longer imputed to him. His sins are now no longer his, any more than a man's wife when lawfully divorced is any longer his. There is a total separation between the Believer and all his old sins, a legal separation too, fully justified and complete.

"Putting away" is used in another sense. Jacob commanded his sons to put away the false gods that were among them. We find Josiah putting away Baal and all the false gods of Israel. Now you know how they acted when they put away false gods. There was a search throughout all the house to find out every teraphim, and every image, and every symbol that had been an object of reverence. I think I see Jacob if he had found a teraphim, throwing it out of the tent door with indignation. And if he saw it lying at a distance, for fear lest any of his sons or his servants should take it up and reverence it again, the Patriarch would go and spurn it with his foot.

Or perhaps he would take it up, and finding his hammer, dash it in pieces, and throw the very dust of it away, as Moses ground the golden calf to pieces and threw the fragments in the water. Or as the young Josias did, who, not content with breaking down the altars, broke the images, themselves--utterly destroyed them. Now in this way has Christ put away His people's sins. He has utterly demolished them, made a clean sweep of them all, thrown them right away, broken them, destroyed them, and so put them away.

"Putting away" may be illustrated in yet another manner. The Israelites were commanded on the feast of the Passover to put away all leaven out of their houses, and to this day they are very scrupulous about the fulfillment of that command at the time of that great festival. The house is very carefully swept lest a crumb of common leavened bread

should remain. The cupboards are ransacked, drawers emptied carefully and swept with a little brush. And then the master of the house will go through every department of the house to see that no trace of leaven should remain. All leaven must be put away that they may keep the feast with unleavened bread.

Now Jesus Christ, in this same way, has put away sin. There might have been a sin left in some secret region of my heart, or soul, or conscience, or memory--hidden in a dark department of my nature--and that little sin would have ruined me. But Jesus put it all away--every crumb and particle of the horrible leaven Christ has swept right out.

He altogether and utterly put away sin by His once appearing. If you are a Believer in Christ, my dear Friend, the putting away of sin for you does not consist in the forgiveness of here and there a great sin--in the plunging into the Red Sea of His blood of here and there a monster iniquity. But all your sins--every size, shape, form, hue, degree, or fashion--are altogether gone.

Crimson sins, black sins, crying sins, every sort of iniquity from your childhood until now, and right on till you enter into the rest of the Beloved--they were all taken and laid upon Christ. He made an end of them all when He offered up His great expiatory Sacrifice. He has put away sin as a whole for His chosen. This is a glorious Truth! If we know that it belongs to us and that our sin was put away--it is enough to make us anticipate the joy of Heaven, and sing the new song--"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

The Greek word, however, is more expressive than the English. I believe it is only used in one other place in the New Testament. And as far as Greek works extant are concerned, it is never used in any other volume.

It is a word coined by the Apostle, a perfectly regular word, but still made by himself to suit his theme. Though the Greek was a copious language, yet when the Holy Spirit was in the Apostle there were not sufficient words extant to express all His meaning. This word is used in another place, in Hebrews 7:18, and is there translated "disannulling," to signify an abrogation, a total abolition, an annihilation. That word will do. Christ was revealed in the end of the world to abrogate, to annihilate, utterly to abolish sin.

Now we all know what it is to have a thing abrogated. Certain laws have held good up to the first of January of this year with regard to the hiring of public carriages. But now we are under a new law. Suppose a driver complies with the new Law, gets his license, puts up his flag, gives the passenger his card of prices, and afterwards the passenger summons him before the magistrate for asking a fare not authorized by the old law? The magistrate would say, "You are out of court, there is no such law. You cannot bring the man here, he has not broken the old law, for he is not under it. He has complied with the requisition of the new law, by which he declares himself no longer under the old rules, and I have no power over him."

So he that believes in Christ Jesus may be summoned by conscience when misinformed before the bar of God, but the answer of peace to his conscience is, "You are not under the Law, but under Grace." "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes." "All that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses." In this way Christ has abrogated the sin of his people. By what image shall I set forth the abolishing of sin? I do not know what metaphor to use about it, but one suggests itself which is far from complete, but may help somewhat.

When Pompey was killed, Julius Caesar obtained possession of a large

casket which contained a vast amount of correspondence which had been carried on with Pompey. There is no doubt whatever, that in that casket were many letters from certain of Caesar's followers making overtures to Pompey, and had Caesar read those letters it is probable that he would have been so angry with many of his friends that he would have put them to death for playing him false. Fearing this, he magnanimously took the casket and destroyed it without reading a single line.

What a splendid way of putting away and annihilating all their offenses against him! Why, he did not even know them! He could not be angry, for he did not know that they had offended. He consumed all their offenses and destroyed their iniquities, so that he could treat them all as if they were innocent and faithful. The Lord Jesus Christ has made just such an end of your sins and mine. Does not the Lord know our sins, then? Yes, in a certain sense, and yet the Lord declares, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." In a certain sense, God cannot forget, but in another sense, He Himself declares that He remembers not the sins of His people, but has cast them behind His back.

"The iniquities of Israel," says He, "shall be sought for, and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." An accusing spirit might have said to Caesar, "Do you not know that Caius and Florius were deeply involved with your enemy, Pompey?" "No," he replies, "I know nothing against them." "But in that casket there is evidence." "Ah," rejoins the hero, "there remains no casket, I have utterly destroyed it!" The metaphor fails because it does not set forth the perfectly legal way in which Jesus has made an end of sin by suffering its penalty. Justice has been satisfied, punishment has been meted out for every sin of mine and yours if we are Believers. And the whole matter has been accomplished, not by an evasion of Law, but by a

fulfillment of it, meeting justice face to face and satisfying vengeance and putting away sin.

Take another illustration, common enough, but quite to the point. A debt is annihilated when it is paid, so the debts that we owed to justice were abrogated, annihilated and ceased to be because Jesus Christ, to the utmost farthing, paid whatever His people owed. Now, child of God, I want you to turn this Truth over and over in your mind. Jesus Christ has put away your sin, all of it, all of it, in all respects. Before God you are accepted as if you were innocent. You are even regarded as if you were something more than innocent, namely, actively righteous. Your sin is so put away that now you are deprived of nothing that sin deprived you of. You have the access which sin once prohibited. You enjoy the favor of God, and nearness to God, and relationship to God, even as if you had never fallen.

When sin was put away, all the effects of sin, in detriment and loss to us before God, were virtually put away from the pardoned one. Think of that and rejoice. Moreover, your sin is put away forever. Do not fall into the idea it ever can return. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," that is to say, on His part. The eternal God never says and unsays, never plays fast and loose with a soul. If you are pardoned, then you are so pardoned that none ever can condemn you in time or in eternity. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Oh, what bliss is this! Do not so much listen to me as let your heart suck out the sweetness of this Truth.

If it is indeed so, what peace you ought to have! Are you tried and afflicted? Remember how Luther said, "Lord, strike, for I am forgiven," as if he thought it mattered little what he suffered now that his sin was gone. Nothing ought to make you suspend your song of praise, O

pardoned Sinner! You can never go down into the pit. God can never be so
wrath with you as to forsake you utterly. You are saved! You have an entailed estate beyond the river--there is a crown in the King's palace which no head but yours can ever wear. And a harp that your fingers must strike with seraphic joy. O you banished ones, in the midst of your exile still sing the songs of Zion in anticipation of the time when you shall sing them without groans to mar their melody!

III. We shall open up to you, dear Friends, with very much brevity, HOW SIN WAS PUT AWAY. The text tells us that our Lord put it away by a Sacrifice. It is that cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion that sin is pardoned through a Sacrifice. Substitution is the very essence and marrow of the Revelation of God. The Lord Jesus Christ stood in the place of the sinner and was made a bloody Sacrifice for sin. Even as the sacrificed lamb poured out its life-blood, so did He give up His life to redeem our lives.

Now, dear Friends, you who are seeking peace today, remember that the place where you will find light for your darkness is where Christ made Himself a Sacrifice for sin. Your comfort will not arise from studying His most pure and admirable life, but by considering His painful substitutionary death. He was made sin for you, though He knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He was made to die a death of pain, ignominy, and anguish, and to pour out His blood that you might not feel the sword of vengeance on account of your sins.

Notice that the text tells us what His sacrifice was--it was Himself. Sin was not put away by the offering of His living works, nor by the incense of His prayer, nor by the oblation of His tears--nor even by the presentation of His pains and groans before God-- but by the sacrifice of HIMSELF.

The Lord Christ gave up for you His human Body and Soul and Spirit--all that constituted "Himself" was given up freely to the death--that the punishment due to our sin might be borne. Dwell on this thought--the sacrifice of Himself. This leads you to remember who He was. He was God over all, blessed forever. The Maker of all worlds, but He gave Himself. See the majesty of His sacrifice! He gave Himself And then behold the infinite merit that there must be in that Sacrifice. Had He been a mere man--the death of one innocent man for another may be supposed to have been an atonement for one man. But because He was infinite in His nature, there was infinite merit in His sufferings.

Doubts, however black they may be, ought to subside when we perceive that the Atonement made must have been infinitely meritorious, because it was not an Atonement of mere tears and blood and works, but an Atonement made by the Lord's giving up Himself, His very Self, that He might put away sin. Ah, my Brethren, I can trust an infinite Savior to put away my sin. If I were told that there was this and that to be done by some human priest to put away my sin, I should be afraid that perhaps their efforts would not answer the designed end. But if my sin is put away because God Himself dwelt among men, and suffered in human flesh in my place, I can believe, and will believe, and rest in peace--

"My soul can on this doctrine live, Can on this doctrine die."

Here is solid ground work for the most guilty, heavy-laden sinner to build a cheerful hope for eternity!

Note well that there is not a word here or anywhere else in Scripture about any renewed and repeated sacrifice. The Roman Catholic church tells us that they continue to present the sacrifice of Christ in the unbloody sacrifice of the "mass." But this is a mere invention of their priests! Our Lord once appeared to put away sin, and thereby perfected forever them that are sanctified. What are you doing, you pretenders to

His name? Would you add to what is perfect? Do you put sin away again after the great High Priest has put it away once and for all? Away, you sons of Antichrist!

Observe, also, that nothing is said about sins ever coming back again. He has put sin away, there is no hint given that it will ever want putting away a second time. He has appeared and put it away finally, totally, eternally. Where, then, is the sin of His people? It is so put away that it is not possible to find it, even if it is searched for, nor can it ever return. Moreover, not a syllable is uttered concerning anyone helping the Lord Jesus to put away sin. He came to put away sin, but it is not added that others joined in the work--neither is it said that it is done if the sinner's tears should flow, or if he should feel deeply, or if he should act worthily, or if he should be obedient. Not at all! It is nakedly and boldly declared that He has put it away.

Now, on the Cross, my dear Hearer, Christ either put all your sins away, or He did not. If He did not, you will live and die in unbelief--if He did--nothing of yours is needed to make the Atonement perfect. All you have to do is to ascertain your part and lot in the great Atonement. "And," says one, "How can I ascertain my portion in it?" You may know by this one thing--Do you believe in Jesus? Do you trust Him? This is the evidence that your sin has ceased to be, and that before you were born, Christ put it away forever. If so, you need not this day be bowed down about it, or go mourning and troubled as though it even now condemned you.

If you believe, rest assured that God loved you from before the foundations of the world. You are viewed in Christ Jesus as clear before the Law. In the Person of the Only Begotten you are accepted in the Beloved. The love of God looked on you in Christ ages ago, before you could look on it or understand it, and in the fullness of time your

sins were foreseen, and their penalty endured by your Redeemer. Methinks I hear, then, this enquiry put, How may I share in this blessed result of the putting away of sin? The answer is, Brethren, the way for us to enjoy a share in it must evidently be one in which we do not, even by implication, seem to claim a part in the putting away of sin.

If you think you can get a part in this gracious result by your own feelings or doings, you dishonor the perfect work of Christ, and so you make a gulf between you and Christ. The only test as to whether Christ put your sin away is this-- Have you done with all idea of putting the sin away yourself? Are you willing that He should have the whole, sole, and entire glory of putting it away? Will you now trust Him with your whole heart to put your sin away? Well, Soul, there never was a man yet who gave up confidence in everything but Christ, and relied completely and heartily upon Christ, but who had, in that fact an assurance that Jesus loved him, and gave Himself for him!

"Oh," says one," I have done that, then, years ago." Rejoice, then! Be glad, and out of love to Jesus go and perform works of holiness to honor Him by Whom you are saved. Rejoice all your days, and praise the name of Him that has washed you. Do not, O you pardoned ones, kneel down every Sunday morning and night, and wail out the cry that you are "miserable sinners"! You ought not to be miserable sinners, now that you are forgiven, justified, adopted, and made one with Christ! You are sinners, but why miserable? To those Believers who call themselves "miserable sinners," the Lord might well reply, "You do not, then, believe Me. Have I not pardoned you, and declared that there is no condemnation for you? Is this your only gratitude? Is there no joyful thankfulness? Nothing but sullen misery?"

Blessed be God, such a form of service is little suitable for Believers

in Jesus, though very fitting for those who trust their baptismal regeneration! Our gladsome lips have learned--

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing Of ourSa vior'sprecious blood, With Divine assurance knowing He has made our peace with God." Sin is gone, gone forever! Go, Believer, and rejoice! But do I hear another say, "O that I could know assuredly that my sin was put away. I gladly would trust the Savior, but the question is, may I trust Him?" That, my Friend, need not be a question. He commands you to trust Him. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned."

You are threatened if you do not believe, therefore take courage, Man, and trust Christ now. "What? And having lived a sinful life up till now, if I, indeed trust Him, will that sinful life be blotted out? Must I not at least go home and begin to read my Bible and spend a month in preparation?" Delay not! Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart. Trust Him now! Saul of Tarsus was struck down at once, in the midst of sin, and saved. The dying thief had not to be taken down from the Cross and laid up in hospital till he passed through a probation. He prayed the prayer, "Lord, remember me!" And he received the answer, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." The pardon of sin is instantaneous. It is not a matter of even minutes or seconds.

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One."

One glance of your soul's eye at a crucified Savior and the simple reliance of your spirit upon Him, and you are saved beyond all risk. The Lord grant you, by His Holy Spirit's aid, to do this today, and I know you will go away to be among the dearest lovers of my Master, and among the most careful of His servants, for you will love Him too well to disobey Him. And it will be your joy from this time forth, even

forever, to honor Him.

Methinks I hear you say, "I who was the chief of sinners was met with when I least expected it by my gracious Savior, while listening to the Gospel. And I was forgiven in a moment through a simple act of faith. And now here I am, my Lord's servant, to live and to die for Him if He will but give me Grace to do so." The Lord grant it, for His name's sake! Amen.

Chapter 4

The Glorious Hereafter and Ourselves

(No. 912)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 23, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now He that has worked us for the same thingis God, who also has given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 5:5.

IT is a very comforting thing to be able to see the work of God in our own hearts. We can clearly enough perceive the effects of the Fall--the workings of our inward corruption are always sufficiently perceptible. We have not to search long for the foul handiwork of Satan within us, for his temptations vex us day by day, and too often wound us to our dismay. The evil influences of the world are also exceedingly apparent to the eyes of self-examination. It is, therefore, consoling to the highest degree when, amidst all this disfiguring of the vessel by the hands of evil, we can see growing traces of the Great Artist's hand still fashioning the clay upon the wheel and undoing the mischief of His enemies.

It is a sweet thing to be able to say with the Apostle that God has worked us to the most grand of all designs. When the Creator of the world puts His all-wise hands to the work of our new creation, we are favored in the highest degree, and ought to be filled with gratitude.

It appears from the text that the Apostle found the indications of the Divine work in a groan. Observe, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." In that groan of his burdened soul he saw the working of the eternal God, and he exclaimed, "He that has worked us for the same thing is God." Believers may trace the finger of God in

their holy joys when the soul, like the lark, mounts up towards Heaven and carols her song of gratitude. But, just as surely is the Holy Spirit present in their sorrows for sin, their inward conflicts, their hungering and thirsting after righteousness, their deep-fetched sighs, and their groans which cannot be uttered.

My Brethren, so long as it is the work of God it is comparatively a small matter to us whether our hearts' utterance is song or sigh. Let us be assured that it is worked by the Spirit, and either the one or the other is a token for good. If it is but proven that "the Lord is there," we hear a voice which says, "It is I, be not afraid."

Our text brings before us a great work of God with a distinct object--our being "clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven." And looking at the words minutely, we see that the one design is accomplished by three great processes. The Lord has worked in us desires after the heavenly Glory. "He that has worked us for the same thing is God." The Apostle had twice over spoken of groaning after the heavenly House, and we understand him here to affirm that this groaning was worked in him by God.

Secondly, the Lord has worked in us a fullness for the eternal world, for so the text may be understood. "He that has fitted us for" the heavenly inheritance of which the Spirit is the earnest. Then thirdly, God has given to Believers, in addition to desires after and fitness for an earnest of the Glory to be revealed, which earnest is the Holy Spirit. Let us speak of these three things as the Holy Spirit may instruct us.

God's work is seen in our souls in causing us exciting, vehement DESIRES AFTER being "clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven." This earnest desire, of which the Apostle has been speaking in the preceding verses, is made up of two things--a painful groaning and

sense of being burdened while we are in this present life, and a supreme longing after our promised portion in the world to come. Dissatisfaction with the very idea of finding a continuing city here, amounting even to groaning, is the condition of the Christian's mind. "We look not at the things which are seen," they are not worth a glance. They are temporal and therefore quite unfit to be the joy of an immortal spirit.

The Christian is the most contented man in the world, but he is the least contented with the world. He is like a traveler in an inn, perfectly satisfied with the inn and its accommodation, considering it as an inn, but putting quite out of all consideration the idea of making it his home. He waits by the way, and is thankful, but his desires lead him ever on-

ward towards that better country where the many mansions are prepared. The Believer is like a man in a sailing vessel, well content with the good ship for what it is, and hopeful that it may bear him safely across the sea, willing to put up with all its inconveniences without complaint.

But if you ask him whether he would choose to live on board in that narrow cabin, he will tell you that he longs for the time when the harbor shall be in view, and the green fields, and the happy homesteads of his native land. We, my Brethren, thank God for all the appointments of Providence--whether our portion is large or scant we are content because God has appointed it--yet our portion is not here, nor would we have it here if we might!--

"We've no abiding city here,

Sad truth were this to be our home." No thought would be more dreadful to us than the idea of having our portion in this life, in this dark world which refused the love of Jesus, and cast Him out of its

vineyard. We have desires which the whole world could not fulfill. We have insatiable yearnings which a thousand empires could not satisfy. The Creator has made us to pant and long after Himself, and all the creatures put together could not delight our souls without His Presence--

"Hopeless of joy in anything below,
We only long to soar,
The fullness of His love to feel,
And lose His smile no more."

In addition to this dissatisfaction, there reigns within the regenerate heart a supreme longing after the heavenly state. When Believers are in their right minds, their aspirations after Heaven are so forcible that they despise death itself. When faith is weak, then the pains and the groans of dying make a black cloud of forebodings which darken the spirit, and we shrink from the thought of departing.

But when we know that our Redeemer lives, and look forward to the Resurrection and to the Glory to be revealed, we cry--

"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate, Nor fear the terrors as she passed." Whatever the separation of the soul from the body may involve of pain or mystery, the Believer feels that he could dare it all to enter at once into the unfading joys of Heaven. Sometimes the heir of Heaven grows impatient of his bondage. Like a captive looking out of the narrow window of his prison beholds the green fields of the unfettered earth, and marks the flashing waves of the ocean, ever free--and hears the songs of the free tenants of the air--he weeps as he views his narrow cell and hears the clanking of his chains.

There are times when the most patient of the Lord's banished ones feel

the home sickness strong upon them. Like those beasts which we have sometimes seen in our menageries, which pace to and fro in their dens, and chafe themselves against the bars--uneasy, unhappy, bursting out every now and then into fierce roars--as though they yearned for the forest or the jungle. Even so we also chafe and fret in this, our prison, longing to be free. As by the waters of Babylon the sons of Zion sat down and wept, even so do we. Dwelling in Kedar's tents and sojourning with Mesech, we long for the wings of a dove that we might fly away and be at rest--

"O my sweet home, Jerusalem,
Would God I were in you!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Your joys that I might see."

Having thus seen that the groaning worked in us by God is made up of dissatisfaction with this world and anxious desire for the world to come, we may profitably consider it yet a little further. What is it that makes the Christian long for Heaven? What is that within him which makes him restless till he reaches the better land? It is, first, a desire for the unseen. The carnal mind is satisfied with what the eyes can see, the hands can handle, and the taste enjoy. But the Christian has a spirit within him which has passions and appetites which the senses cannot gratify.

This spirit has been created, developed, enlightened, and instructed by the Holy Spirit, and it lives in a world of unseen realities of which unregenerate men have no knowledge. While in this sinful world and earthly body, the spirit feels

like a citizen exiled from his native land. It stands upon the outmost borders of its own region and longs to penetrate into the center of spiritual things. Hampered with this body of clay, the spirit, which is

akin to angels, cries after liberty. It longs to see the Great Father of Spirits, to commune with the bands of the pure spirits forever surrounding the Throne of God, both angels and glorified men. It longs, in fact, to dwell in its true element. A spiritual creature, begotten from above can never rest till it is present with the Lord.

Oh, to see the things which we have heard of in metaphor and simile, to enjoy them really with our spirits! The harps, the crowns, the palms--what must it be to possess such joys? The streets of transparent gold, the river of the water of life, the glassy sea, the Throne of the Great King--what must all these be? Until these joys and glories be all our own, our souls will always cry and sigh.

Moreover, the Christian spirit pants after holiness. He who is born again of incorruptible seed finds his worst trouble to be sin. While he was in his natural state he loved sin, and sought pleasure in it. But now, being born of God and made liken to God, he hates sin. The mention of it vexes his ears. The sight of it in others causes him deep sorrow--the presence of it in his own heart is his daily plague and burden. If he could be rid of sin, this mortal body might not be to him a load. But because the tendencies of the animal passions are always towards evil, he longs to be rid of this vile body so that he may be clothed with his House which is in Heaven--from which all these passions will be expelled.

Oh, to be without the tendency to sin, without the possibility to sin! What bliss the prospect affords! My Brethren, if we could be placed in the meanest and most destitute condition, and yet could be perfect, we would prefer it to being sinful, even though we should reign in the palaces of kings. Our spirit, therefore, cries after the immortal state, because sin will be forever banished from it.

In the Christian's spirit there is also a sighing after rest. "There

remains a rest for the people of God," as though God had put in us the longing for what He has prepared. We labor daily to enter into that rest. Brethren, we long for rest, but we cannot find it here. "This is not our rest." We cannot find rest even within ourselves. Wars and fights are continuous within the regenerate spirit. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit wars against the flesh. As long as we are here it must be so. We are in the camp of war, not in the chamber of ease. The trumpet must sound, and the clash of arms must be heard. We must go to our watchtower and continue there both night and day, for we are militant as yet, and not triumphant.

Our soul pines to be at rest. When shall the rowers of our spirit indulge themselves to the full without the fear of falling into sin? When shall my memory remember nothing but what will glorify God? When shall my judgment always rightly balance all events? When shall my desires be after nothing but my Lord? When shall my affections cling to nothing but Him? O when shall I possess the rest of the sinless, the rest of the satiated, the rest of the secure, the rest of the victorious? This longing for rest helps to inflame the Christian's desires for the House not made with hands.

This Divinely-worked desire is made up of another element, namely, a thirst for communion with God. Here, at the nearest, our state is described as being "absent from the Lord." We do enjoy fellowship with God, for, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," but it is remote and dark. "We see through a glass darkly," and not as yet face to face. We have the smell of His garments from afar, and they are perfumed with myrrh, and aloes, and cassia--but as yet the King is in His ivory palaces--and the gate of pearl is between us and Him.

O that we could come to Him! O that He would even now embrace us, and

kiss us with the kisses of His mouth! The more the heart loves Christ, the more it longs for the greatest possible nearness to Him. Separation is very painful to a bride whose heart is burning for the bridegroom's presence. And such are we--longing to hear the most sweet voice of our Spouse and to see the countenance which is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. For a saved soul to long to be where its Savior is, is no unnatural desire! To be with Him is far better than earth's best, and it would be strange if we did not long for it.

God, then, has worked in us this in all its forms. He has made us to dread the thought of having our portion in this life. He has created in us a supreme longing for our heavenly Home, has taught us to value unseen and eternal things, to pant after holiness, to sigh after sinless rest, and to yearn after closer fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. My Brethren, if you have felt a desire such as I have described, give the glory of it to God! Bless and love the Holy Spirit who has worked this same thing in you, and ask Him to make the desires yet more vehement, for they are to His glory.

Bear with a word in praise of this God-worked groaning. This desire after the world to come is above ordinary nature. All flesh is grass, and the grass loves to strike its root deep into the earth. It has no tendrils with which to clasp the stars. Man by nature would be content to abide on earth forever. If you long for a holy and spiritual state, your desire is not of nature's creation. God has worked it in you. Yes, I will venture to say that the desire for Heaven is contrary to nature. For as there is an inertia in matter which makes it indisposed to move, so is there in human nature an indisposition to leave the present for the future.

Like the snail, we stick to the rock on which we crawl. We cling to earth like the ivy to the wall. We are afraid to set sail upon that

unknown sea of eternity, and therefore shiver on the shore. We dread to leave "the warm precincts of this house of clay," and hovel as this body is, we count it dear. It is the Lord who forbids our lying among the pots and gives us the wings of a dove to mount aloft. As soon would a clod seek the sun as a soul seek its God, if a miracle of Grace were not worked upon it.

While they are contrary to the old nature, such aspirations prove the existence of the new nature. You may be quite sure that you have the nature of God in you if you are pining after God. And if your longings are of a spiritual kind, depend upon it--you are a spiritual man. It is not in the animal to sigh after mental enjoyments, neither is it in the mere carnal man to sigh after heavenly things. What your desires are, that your soul is. If you are really insatiably hungering after holiness and after God, there is within you that which is liken to God, that which is essentially holy. There is, indeed, a work of the Holy Spirit within your hearts.

I shall detain you awhile to notice the means by which the Holy Spirit quickens these desires within our spirits. This desire after a portion in the unseen world is first infused in us by regeneration. Regeneration begets in us a spiritual nature, and the spiritual nature brings with it its own longings and desires. These longings and desires are after perfection and God. Imagine an angel imprisoned in a stable--it is perfectly certain that it would be discontent with the place where the horned oxen lay. If it felt that the Divine will commanded it to tarry there for awhile, I doubt not that the bright visitant would contentedly put up with the confinement.

But if it had liberty to leave the society of beasts, how gladly would the bright spirit ascend to its native place! Yes, Heaven is the place for angels, the true abode of holy spirits and we, too, since our

spiritual nature is born from above, long to be there--nor shall we be content until we are. These desires are further assisted by instruction. The more the Holy Spirit teaches us of the world to come the more we long for it. If a child had lived in a mine it might be content with the glimmer of candle light. But if it should hear of the sun, the green fields and the stars, you may depend upon it--the child would not be happy until it could ascend the shaft and behold for itself the brightness of which it had heard. And as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the world to come we feel longings within us, mysterious but mighty, and we sigh and cry to be where Jesus is.

These desires are further increased by sanctified afflictions. Thorns in our nest make us take to our wings. The embittering of this cup makes us earnestly desire to drink of the new wine of the kingdom. We are very much like our poor who would stay at home in England and put up with their lot, hard though it is. But when at last there comes a worse distress than usual, then straightway they talk of emigrating to those fair and boundless fields across the Atlantic where a kindred nation will welcome them with joy.

So here we are in our poverty, and we make the best of it we can. But a sharp distress wounds our spirit and then we say we will run away to Canaan, to the land that flows with milk and honey. For there, we think, we shall suffer no distress, neither shall our spirits hunger any more. Heavenly desires are still farther inflamed by communion with Christ. The sweets as well as the bitters may be made to increase our longings after the world to come. When a man has once known what fellowship with Jesus is, he then pines to enjoy it forever. Like the Gauls on this side the Alps, who, when they had once drank the Italian wines, said one to another, "It must be a fair land where they grow such wine as this. Come, Brethren, let us draw our swords and cross the

Alps and take the vineyards for ourselves." Thus does the love of Jesus set us longing to be with Him--

"Since I have tasted of the grapes, I oftentimes long to go Where my dear Lord the vineyard keeps, And all the clusters grow."

Communion with Christ sharpens the edge of our desire for Heaven. And so, to close this vein of thought, does elevation of soul. The more we are sanctified and lifted above the grossness of earthliness into conformity with Jesus, the more we long for the world to come.

A peasant at the plow is quite content to mix with his fellow laborers--but suppose he forms a passion for the study of the stars, feels a poet's frenzy, develops mathematical powers, learns the science of flowers--or in any way discovers the treasure hidden in the field of learning? He will be sure to be uneasy in ignorance, and will pine for books and education. He dreams of schools, and colleges, and libraries. His fellow plowmen laugh at him and count him but a fool. If they have enough to eat and drink and clothe themselves, they are content--but he has wants for which the village has neither sympathy nor supply.

His elevation of mind has brought with it groans--desires to which, had he no more ambition than his fellows--he would have been a stranger. So is it with the regenerated man--in proportion as he is elevated by the Holy Spirit by growth in Divine Grace, the higher he rises--the more he longs to rise. To him that has, it is given, and he desires to have in abundance. With a sacred covetousness he pants after yet higher degrees of Grace, and after Glory itself. Thus have I opened up to you the desire which the Holy Spirit works in us. "He that has worked us for the same thing is God."

II. Our second subject of discourse is THE FITNESS FOR HEAVEN which is worked in us. Calvin's interpretation of the text is, "He that has fitted us for the same thing is God." Ah, how true this is! There is no

fitness whatever in man by nature for communion with his God. It must be a Divine work within him. The Father works in us fitness for Heaven by separating us in the everlasting decree to be His own. Heaven is the place of God's own abode--we must be God's own people to be fit to be there. He fits us by adopting us into His family, by justifying us through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by preserving us by His power.

The Son of God has an equal share in the working of this fitness. He fits us by blotting out our iniquities and by transferring to us His righteousness--by taking us into marriage union with Himself. The Holy Spirit, forever to be blessed, has His share in this work. It is He who first infuses the new nature. He who gives us spiritual food for the new nature, giving us to feed upon the flesh and blood of Christ. It is He who instructs and develops that new nature, and through the blood of Jesus makes the man meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, who thus in blessed union "has worked us for the same thing."

Now, let me describe with great brevity the work of the Holy Spirit in preparing us for Glory. As we have already hinted--and we must necessarily traverse much the same ground--fitness for Heaven, as worked in us by the Spirit, consists, first, in the possession of a spiritual nature. Heaven is pre-eminently a spiritual region and those who have no nature begotten from above would not by any possibility be able to enjoy the bliss of Heaven. They would be quite out of their element. It could not be a Heaven to them. A garden bee in the midst of the flowers is at home and gathers honey from all their cups and bells. But open the gate and admit a swine, and it sees no beauty in lilies, roses, or other flowers. Therefore it proceeds to root, and tear, and

spoil in all directions. Such would an unregenerate man be in Heaven. While holy saints shall find bliss in everything in the Paradise of God, an ungodly sinner would be at war with everything in that holy region. Fitness for Heaven lies much in a holy nature--a love of Heaven is as contrary to fallen humanity as light to darkness. Do you not feel it so? Left to yourselves, O saints of God, do you not know that you would go back to Egypt? Do you not feel that the old nature lusts after evil?

Well, then, as you cannot possibly inherit Heaven unless you delight in holiness, you owe this fitness for the perfect state to the Holy Spirit. Fitness for Heaven lies in a capacity to delight in God. I have always loved that first question and answer in the Assembly's Catechism, "What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Not to enjoy yourself forever, not even to enjoy the harps of gold, the angelic society and the feasts of the beatified--but to enjoy God forever. If a man has as yet no delight in God and takes no solace in thoughts of Him, he has no fitness for Heaven, and cannot get there. But if you delight in God, it is God that has "worked you to the same thing."

Fitness for Heaven will lie very much in love to the saints. Those who do not love the people of God on earth would find their company very irksome forever. Here the unrighteous can manage to endure the company of the godly because it can be diluted with an admixture of graceless men. But up there the people shall be all righteous and their conversation shall be all of Christ and of things Divine--such society and such conversation would be weariness, itself, to godless hearts. My Hearer, if you delight in the company of the Believers--and if the more

spiritual their conversation the more you enjoy it--then you have been worked to this same thing by the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul, and you may bless the Lord for it.

Joy in service is another sweet preparation for Heaven. Heaven is sinless service. They serve God day and night in His Temple--service without weariness, service without imperfection, service without cessation. Now do you delight to serve God? If so, you evidently have a fitness for Heaven. But as you once abhorred that service, and were the bondslave of the Prince of Darkness--if you now long and wish to glorify your God--you have been worked thereto by the Holy Spirit's power.

Conformity to Christ Jesus, again, is another preparation for Heaven. Much of Heaven consists in being like Christ. It is the very object of Divine Grace that we should be conformed to His image, that He should be the first-born among many Brethren. Now, if you are growing, by His Grace, somewhat like Christ--if you desire to be like He is, imitating His tender, loving, brave, prayerful, obedient, self-sacrificing spirit--you have some fitness for the skies. But that fitness was not there by nature. You were once as unlike Christ as possible. God has worked all this in you.

I am afraid that I go from one point to another rather too rapidly, but the gist of it all is this--Heaven is the world of spirits, the land of holiness, the House of God-- and if we have any capacity for the enjoyment of Heaven, it has been worked in us by God. The unfitness of unrenewed souls for Heaven may be illustrated by the incapacity of certain uneducated and coarse-minded persons for elevated thoughts and intellectual pursuits.

When a little child, I lived some years in my grandfather's house. In his garden there was a fine old hedge of yew of considerable length

which was clipped and trimmed till it made quite a wall of verdure.
Behind it was a wide grass walk which looked upon the fields. The grass was kept mown, so as to make pleasant walking. Here, ever since the old Puritan Chapel was built, godly divines had walked and prayed and meditated. My grandfather was likely to use it as his study. Up and down it he would walk when preparing his sermons, and always on Sundays when it was fair, he had half an hour there before preaching.
To me it seemed to be a perfect Paradise, and being forbidden to stay there when Grandfather was meditating, I viewed it with no small degree of awe. I love to think of the green and quiet walk at this moment. But I was once shocked, and even horrified, by hearing a farming man remark concerning this sanctum sanctorum, "It' ud grow a many 'taturs if it wor ploughed up." What cared he for holy memories? What were meditation and contemplation to him? Is it the chief end of man to grow potatoes and eat them? Such, on a larger scale, would be an unconverted man's estimate of joys so elevated and refined as those of Heaven.
Alphonse Karr tells a story of a man servant who asked his master to be allowed to leave his cottage and sleep over the stable. What was the matter with his cottage? "Why, Sir, the nightingales all around the cottage make such a 'jug, jug, jug' at night, that I cannot bear them."
A man with a musical ear would be charmed with the nightingales' song--but here was a man without a musical soul who found the sweetest notes a nuisance. This is a feeble image of the incapacity of unregenerate man for the enjoyments of the world to come--as he is incapable of enjoying them, so is he incapable of longing for them.
But if you and I have grown out of all taste for the things of sin and time. If we are sighing for holy, godly joys, we have therein an evidence that God has worked in us, by His Grace, and will continue to do so till we are made perfect and immortal.

III. The text informs us that in addition to working in us desires and fitness for Glory, the Lord has graciously given to us an EARNEST OF GLORY. An earnest, as you all know, is unlike a pledge, in some respects. A pledge has to be returned when the matter which it ensures is obtained--but an earnest is a part of the thing itself. A man has so much wage to take on Saturday night, he receives a part of it in the middle of the week, it is an earnest of the full payment--a part of the payment itself.

So the Holy Spirit is a part of Heaven itself. The work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is the bud of Heaven. Divine Grace is not a thing which will be taken away from us when we enter Heaven, but which will develop into Glory. Grace will not be withdrawn as though it had answered its purpose, but will be matured into Glory. What is meant by the Holy

Spirit being given to us as an earnest? I believe it signifies, first, that the very dwelling of the Holy Spirit within our soul is the earnest of Heaven.

My Brothers and Sisters, if God Himself condescends to make these bodies His temples, is not this akin to Heaven's honors? Only put away sin, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would make even this earthly state to be heavenly to us. O my Brethren, you little know what a weight of Glory is contained in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! If you did but know it and believe in it always, the sorrows of this life would become trivial, and as for the frowns of men you would deride them. God dwells in you. You walk among the sons of men unknown and despised, yet as angels see you, you are the objects of their wonder! Rejoice that in this, then, you have an earnest of Heaven.

But everything the Holy Spirit works in us is an earnest of Heaven. When the Holy Spirit brings to us the joys of hope, this is an earnest.

While singing some glowing hymn touching the New Jerusalem, our spirit shakes off all her doubts and fears and anticipates her everlasting heritage. When we enjoy the full assurance of faith and read our title clear to mansions in the skies--when faith, looking simply to the finished work of Christ, knows whom she has believed, and is persuaded that he is able to keep that which she has committed to Him--this is an earnest of Heaven. Is not Heaven security, confidence, peace?

The security, confidence, peace which spring from faith in Jesus Christ are part and parcel of the Heaven of the blessed. Heaven is the place of victory, and, my dear Friends, when we are victorious over sin, when the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome some propensity, to put down our anger, to crush our pride, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts--then in that conscious victory over sin we enjoy an earnest of the triumph of Heaven. And once more, when the Holy Spirit gives us to enjoy fellowship with Jesus Christ, and with one another--when in the breaking of bread we feel the union which exists between Christ and His members--we have a foretaste of the fellowship of Heaven.

Do not say, then, that you know nothing of what Heaven is. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." But, "He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Spiritual natures do know what Heaven is--in the sense of knowing from the drop what the river must be like--of understanding from the beam what the sun must be. Its fullness you cannot measure, its depth you cannot fathom, its unutterable bliss you cannot tell.

But still you know of what character the Glory will be--you know that pure are the joys of the blessed, and all their dwellings peace. You know that fellowship with Christ and with holy spirits makes up much of Heaven, and you know this because the earnest of the Spirit is a part

and parcel of the thing itself.

I conclude with a practical remark or two. If these things are so, what emotions are most fitting for us? Answer-- first, O Believers in Jesus, be thankful! Overflow with thankfulness. Remember these things are not your own productions. They are not flowers of your own garden--they have been planted in your soul by another Hand--and watered by a superior Power. Give all the glory to His holy name, for to Him all the glory belongs. Not a good desire in you was self-originated, no part of your fitness for Paradise was self-formed. Grace has done it, Divine Grace has done it all!

Adore and bless the Holy Spirit who has worked all your works in you, for you are "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." Be thankful! As the birds created sing to pour out their song. As the flowers, the handiwork of God, load the air with their perfume--so sing-- and let your lives be all-fragrant with gratitude to Him who has worked you to the same thing.

Another emotion we ought all to feel who have this worked in us is that of reverence. When a scholar knows that all he has learned has been taught him by his master, he looks up from his master's feet into his master's face with respectful reverence and esteem. O reverence the Holy Spirit! Let us, in our public ministry, and in our private meditations always stand in awe of Him. I am afraid we too much forget Him--let us, instead, reverence Him especially by obedience to His faintest monitions. As the leaves of the aspen tremble to the faintest breath of the wind, so may we tremble to the faintest breath of God's Holy Spirit.

Let us prize the Word of God because He wrote it. Let us love the ordinances because He puts life and power into them. Let us love His

indwelling, and never grieve Him lest He hide His face from us. "He that has worked us for the same thing is God." Vex not His Spirit, but anxiously ask that He would continue His work, and complete it in righteousness.

Lastly, our heart ought to feel great confidence this morning. If the good thing had been worked by ourselves, we might be sure that it would fail before long. Nothing of mortal man was ever perfect. But if He that has begun the good

work is God, there is no fear that He will forsake or leave His work undone. They shall never say of Him, " He began to build and was not able to finish." No war of His was ever undertaken and then given up because He had not counted the cost. God has begun, God will complete. His promise is "Yes and amen," and never was forfeited yet. Therefore let us be well assured, and let our hearts be glad.

Dear Hearers, the unhappy thing about this is that there are so many who have no desires for the blessed hereafter, no fitness for it, no earnest of it. Ah, then, the prophecies that are within you--what do they foretell? No yearning for Heaven--does not that foretell that there is no Heaven for you? No fitness for the Presence of God. What does that say? Why, that in the Presence of God you shall not rest. Earnest of the Spirit? Why, you almost laugh at the idea. Ah, then, no earnest is a proof that there is no reward for you.

But what then? Will you be annihilated? Will you pass out of this existence and cease to be? Dark as were that prospect--yes, dark as midnight--yet were it brighter than the fate which the Word of God allots you. There will be darkness, but you shall live in it. There will be death, but in it you must ceaselessly exist. For if the righteous are promised "life eternal," it is also written, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment." God save you from such woe by

leading you to trust the Savior. Then you will confess with us, "He that has worked us for the same thing is God," and unto God be the glory. Amen.

Chapter 5

Method and Music, Or the Art of Holy and Happy Living

(No. 913)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 30, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him." Colossians 3:17.

IT is always an advantage to have the laws of a kingdom as concise as possible. No one will ever be able to tell how much of litigation and consequent calamity has been caused in this country by the confused condition of our laws. When Napoleon issued his celebrated "Code Napoleon," which is an admirable summary of French Law, he conferred upon the empire one of the greatest gifts and proved himself a wise ruler.

We want law to be put into such a form that it can be understood, and that its application to many cases can be discovered at once. In the great moral government of God we have no room to complain in this matter--the precepts of holiness are few and comprehensive. First of all, the whole of morality was summed up in the Ten Commandments, and written upon two tablets. Then, as if this were not concise enough, we have the whole Law summarized in two commands, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself."

And even this is brought into shorter compass still, for that one word, "love," is the essence of all Divine Law. We, as Christians, find in the text an instance of the terseness, brevity, and clearness of Divine precepts. We have here a Law applicable to every Believer--to every action, word and thought--in every place, under all circumstances. And

yet this comprehensive command is expressed in very few words. It is a great advantage to the mechanic to be able to carry with him in a small compass his square or rule by which he can adjust his materials, discover his errors, design correctly, and estimate his work when finished. Without such a rule he would be quite at a loss--with it he is ready for work.

We have before us a compendious rule of life, a standard of morals, a guide to holiness which we may carry in our memories without the slightest difficulty. And which, if we have but the will to use it, will be found never to fail us on any occasion. As the mariner's compass or the polestar, so may the text be to us. Here is an infallible directory as to the way of holiness--a judge whose decisions in the matter of righteousness and Truth none need distrust. Read the text over, and then I shall ask you to observe the points in it.

"Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him."

Observe, first, holy walking described. In the second part of the verse note holy music prescribed. And to enforce the whole text bear with me patiently till we close with the third head, which will be holy motive inscribed--inscribed, I trust, upon all our hearts.

I. HOLY WALKING DESCRIBED. "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." This rule is not applicable to every person here present. It can only be practiced by the regenerate. You must be in Christ before you can do anything in Christ's name. Until your nature is renewed, until you have submitted yourselves unto the righteousness of Christ, until Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory, you are not capable of walking after this high and hallowed fashion. "You must be born again."

The precept demanding your immediate attention is not the precept of

this text but another. The words of Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, are for you, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Or this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." You must begin at the beginning. It will but mislead you if I exhort you to walk as Believers before you have received the inner life. The root must be changed before the fruit can be bettered. You need a radical change, my unconverted Hearer, and you must have it or perish forever.

Do not imagine that any imitation of Christian manners will save you--do not conceive that hanging upon your lifeless branches the semblance of fruits will transform you into a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. Oh, no, the sap within you must be changed. The life of God must be infused into your soul. You must be made one with Christ, or you cannot serve Him. This precept, belongs, therefore, to none of you who have not believed in Christ Jesus! But it belongs to all of you, without exception, who are named by the name of Jesus Christ in Truth and sincerity. To all of you who have submitted yourselves to His government and are trusting in Him for salvation. You will listen, I trust, and give earnest heed to this message from your Beloved.

What, then, does this mean, that we are to do everything both in word and deed in the name of the Lord Jesus? Answer--there are six points in which this precept requires reverent care. First, do all through the office and name of Christ as Mediator. You as a Christian are bound to offer daily praise. You should often lift up your heart in grateful songs and Psalms to God--but see to it that you do all this work of praise in the name of the Lord Jesus. No praise of yours can be sweet with God except it is presented through your great High Priest. Bring,

therefore, your gifts of thankfulness to this altar which sanctifies the giver and the gift, and ever bless God through Jesus Christ.

You are also to abound in prayer. It is your vital breath. You cannot flourish as a Christian unless you constantly draw near to God in supplication. But your supplications must always be presented through the name of Jesus Christ. His name gives prevalence to prayer. It is not so much your earnestness or sincerity as His precious blood that speaks in the ears of God and intercedes for you. Pray always, then, with your eyes upon the finished Propitiation and the living Intercessor. Always plead the merits of Immanuel, and Heaven's gate shall open to you.

In addition to your prayers and praises, you are bound to serve Him according to the abilities entrusted to you in teaching the ignorant the way of salvation, in bringing in the unconverted, and in edifying the saints. But remember that your service to God in these respects can only be acceptable as you present it through the name of Jesus Christ. The hand of the Crucified One must offer for you the sweet cane which you have bought with money, and the fat of all your sacrifices. If you could give to God all the wealth that you possess, all the time of your mortal existence, all the talents with which you have been endowed--if you could do this from now on without a failure--if you did not present the offering through Jesus Christ it would be as though you had done nothing.

Your burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings would have no acceptance with Jehovah, for your sinful nature pollutes them all. How necessary it is, then, that we should often pause in our holy work, and say, "I am doing this for God, but am I presenting it in the appointed way? If I see anything of merit in what I am doing, I am acting contrary to the Gospel rule and I shall be rejected. I must bring all my work to the

High Priest of my profession and offer it through Him."--

"The iniquity of all our holy things Is cleansed by His blood, which covers all, And adds a rich perfume divinely sweet, Winning acceptance at the Throne of God For broken prayers, and faulty songs, and even For service marred with sad infirmities." Take heed, dear Hearer, that you see the blood sprinkled on your service for God. Almost all things under the Law were sanctified by blood, and all things under the Gospel, without exception, must be thus made sweet to God. The atoning sacrifice, the prevalent intercession of the one appointed Mediator, Christ Jesus, must be constantly before our minds in all that we attempt to do for our Lord God. Let us never forget this lest we utterly fail.

A second meaning of this precept is, "Do all under the authority of the Lord Jesus as your King." Say of such-and-such a doubtful or evil action, "This I cannot do. I could not feel that I was authorized to do it by any precept or example of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This I cannot do, for I should be stepping aside from the allegiance which I owe to Him. Therefore this I will not do, be the consequences what they may of loss or of suffering. I am not authorized by Christ to follow this course, neither will I, come fair, come foul."

On the other hand, when the act is allowed in Scripture, and only forbidden by the traditions of men, you may safely say, "This I feel that I may do. I see my Master has laid down no restrictions, therefore I will submit to no human traditions or regulations. The commands which will-worship would inflict upon me I cast to the wind, for superfluities of pretended holiness are but superfluities of naughtiness." When positive duty is concerned, your language will be, "This ac-

tion I find that I must do, for I see an express command for it--therefore, by His Grace, it shall be done. Be it difficult, it shall be achieved. Be it impossible, I will wait on Him who enables faith to remove mountains."

O that every Christian were altogether and evermore obedient to heavenly rule! As the planet revolves undeviatingly in its orbit, because with the law imposed upon it there has come forth a constraining and impelling force--so may we also pursue our course of duty, because we have not only heard the Divine precept--but feel the sacred energy of the Holy Spirit leading us in the prescribed path.

Brethren, how safe we feel, and how happy in our consciences, if we are certain that we have the authority of the Great King for all our actions! The business of a Christian upon earth is not an independent one. He is not acting on his own account, but he is a steward for Christ.

What if I compare him to a commission agent who is sent abroad by his firm with full powers from his employer to transact business for the house which he represents? He is not to trade for himself, but he agrees to do all in the name of the firm which commissions him. He receives his instructions and all he has to do is to carry them out.

His whole time and talent being by express agreement at the absolute disposal of his employers. Now, if this man shall lend himself to an opposition firm, or trade on his own account, he is not true to his engagements and he has to bear the responsibility of his acts. But so long as he acts for his firm, and does his best, his course is an easy and safe one.

If he follows the instructions of his principals he is eased of all responsibility. Should his trade be profitable or otherwise, he need not be vexed with anxieties, provided he has diligently followed the

commands received from home. His acts are authorized from headquarters, and they are, therefore, safe for him. He falls back on his principals who gave him the commands, and in whose name he acted.

Now if we serve ourselves or the world, we must take the consequences of our unfaithfulness. But if we honestly serve the Lord, all is clear. When a Christian can say concerning any course of conduct, "I am bid to do this by Christ Jesus my Lord--I can find chapter and verse to authorize my acts." When he can feel that he is working for Christ and not for himself--with a single eye to the glory of God, and not with sinister aims and selfish motives--then he treads as on a rock, and defies the censures of his enemies. Let us, then, take good heed to our Lord's words, and walk carefully in His commands, for then His authority protects us, and every tongue that rises against us in judgment we shall condemn.

This rule of acting under the authority of Christ is applicable in an emphatic sense to those who are called to special service in the kingdom of Christ. Every man is called to do all the good he can, but some men are set apart to labor in peculiar departments of Christian work--and these should be doubly careful to do all in their Master's name. If a man were sinking through the rotten ice, any one of us would be authorized to do all we could to save him. But the iceman, who is appointed on purpose that he may save lives, has a peculiar authority for anything that he takes upon himself to do in the way of rescuing the drowning. He has the name of the Royal Humane Society at his back. If a stranded ship were breaking up and the crew were ready to perish, we are all of us authorized to do all we can to save the shipwrecked. But the men who belong to the lifeboat's appointed crew have a right to come to the fore and take the oars and put out to sea. They are authorized to lead the way in daring and danger. So, my Brethren, those

of you who have felt the Divine call within you, the sacred impulse which compels you to devote yourself to the salvation of your fellow men, you may do it boldly and without apology.

Your authority is from Christ, for the Holy Spirit has set you apart for the work. Let no man hinder or dispirit you. Press forward to the front rank in self-denying labor. Call it not impertinence, O you carping critics! It is but holy courage which brings earliest hearts to the fore. Push to the very front, you men of God, filled with daring and self-sacrifice--for if others should impute your zeal to evil motives, the Lord who reads the heart understands you--and having given you a commission He will not fail to vindicate His faithful servants.

A third sense of the text is important. We should do all under the sanction of the Lord Jesus as our Exemplar. It is an admirable course for us all to pursue, if when we find ourselves in circumstances of perplexity we ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus Christ have done if He were in my circumstances?" The answer to that question is the solution of your difficulty. Whatever He would have done it will be safe enough for you to do. It is certain that He would not have been unbelieving. Equally certain that He would not have done a wrong thing to deliver Himself. We are also sure that He would not have been impatient, rebellious, or despairing--nor would He have grown wrathful or morose.

Well then, I know what I must not be and it may be possible to learn my positive, as well as my negative behavior from the same Guide. I shall be able to discover by turning over the pages of the Evangelists some portion of the Savior's

life very like my own. What He was in that situation I must pray for Divine Grace that I may be, and I shall certainly be led in the path of wisdom. The royal rule for a Christian is not what is fashionable, for

we are not to be conformed to this world. It is not what is gainful, for the pursuit of gain would lead us to run greedily in the way of Balaam for reward.

It is not that which is generally prescribed in society, for full often the prescriptions of society are antagonistic to the teachings of Christ. Not even the conduct of professors, for too many even among them walk as Paul tells us even weeping, as the enemies of the Cross of Christ. Alas, my Brethren, the current holiness of the Church falls far below the Scriptural standard! Neither are the common rules of action among professors such as we could safely follow. A safe example is to be found nowhere but in the life of Jesus Christ Himself. Even the holiest of men are only to be followed so far as they follow Christ, but no further.

My Brethren, how calm will your hearts be, how serenely will you face your afflictions if you can feel, "I have done nothing but what my Master did before me. I have sought to tread in the footprints of His pilgrimage!" Why, you must be safe, you must be accepted if you do as Jesus did--for never can Christ's example lead a simple soul astray--"It is always safe for souls to follow on Where Christ their holy Shepherd leads the way." Furthermore, as we are to do all through the office of Christ as Mediator, within the authority of Christ as King, under the sanction of Christ as Exemplar, so we should do everything to the glory of the Lord Jesus as our Lord and God.

When the Spanish mariners were traversing the seas upon voyages of discovery they never touched upon new land, whether an insignificant island or a part of the main continent, without at once setting up the standard of Ferdinand and Isabella, and taking possession of the soil in the name of their Catholic Majesties of Spain. Wherever the Christian goes, his first thought should be to take possession of all

hearts in the name of the Lord Jesus, consecrating all opportunities and influences to the Redeemer's service. Such common things as eating and drinking become, by the giving of devout thanks, consecrated to Christ's name. There is no action which is lawful, however commonplace it may be, but may be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer.

If the intense desire of our spirit shall be that we may glorify God as long as we are in this body, we shall find ways and means of accomplishing our object--and the Holy Spirit will help our infirmities. My dear Brethren, our soul's desires should be always true to Christ--most chastely faithful so as not to tolerate any carnal motive or self-seeking. How easily do we give place to self-glorification! How almost insensibly do we expect to receive honor of men! It is very hard to keep ourselves clear of self-seeking under some form or other--for even self-denial may be used with an object which is the reverse of self-denial.

The old philosopher, seeing a fool in fine apparel, pointed at him, and said, "that's pride," but he was equally right when seeing certain Spartans who affected to dress meanly, he said, "and that's pride." Pride often stands in the doorway, but it can as readily hide in the corner. There is a pride of self-sacrifice and a pride of apparent humility, which is everyway as haughty as vainglory itself.

Dear Friends, we must live for Christ, cost us what it may of watchfulness. We must not fail here. We dare not live for a party, or a sect, or even altogether for any one Church, however dear to us. We may live for the Truth, but only because God is glorified thereby. First and last, in the middle and everywhere, the constraining thought of Christian life should be, "all for Jesus."--

"All for the Master, all without reserve, All to the utmost of our manhood's might Each pulse, each throb of heart and thrill of nerve,

Each hour of busy day and silent night."

Beloved, it is delightful to know that Christ is all mine, and I am all Christ's. It is a holy aspiration to desire to enjoy as much of Christ as our nature can receive, and then to exhibit as much of Christ as Divine Grace can enable us to reveal. "Everything for Jesus." "Christ all and in all Christ." Let these be the mottoes of every Believer. "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Aim in all you do to do if for His Glory.

The fifth point is, do all in the strength of the Lord Jesus as your Helper. With Him is the residue of the Spirit. And the Spirit of God is the Believer's power. "Without Me you can do nothing," says our Lord. We know the truth of that saying by unwise attempts which have ended in mournful failures. But let us in the future remember this Truth of God practically. Never let us commence a work without seeking strength from on High. We go about Christian service very often as though we felt ourselves quite up to the mark for it. We pray without asking the preparation of the heart from God.

We sing--ah, my Brethren, how universally is it so--without at all entreating the Holy Spirit to quicken our praises. And I fear some of us must confess sorrowfully that we preach at times as though the preaching were to be our work and not the work of the Holy Spirit through us. Do not you, as hearers, too often listen to the Word as if the mere hearing of it would do you good, or as if the speech of such-and-such a man would be certainly blessed to you? Shouldn't you, instead, wait upon God beforehand that your going up to the assembly might be profitable to your souls? Do all in the Master's strength, and how differently everything will be done!

Acknowledge all the time you are at your work that your strength comes

from the Lord alone. Never let the thought cross your mind that you, as an experienced Christian, have a fitness for the work peculiarly your own--so that you can dispense with prayers for Divine aid, so necessary to the young! Never imagine that because through long years you have performed a service with acceptance that you can therefore now do it without renewed help. This is the way by which we sink into routine, degenerate into religious automata, and become like formalists and hypocrites. This is the way in which the power of God and the vitality of godliness are rendered so rare in the Churches.

If we do not feel conscious day by day of abiding weakness and consequent need of fresh strength from the Most High, we shall soon cease to be full of Divine Grace. Write this upon the tablets of your heart, "All my fresh springs are in You," and from this day forward in word and deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus--and you will derive all your spiritual energy from Him, the Source.

Sixthly, we should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, for He should be the element in which we live. It is said of the modern Greeks that whatever may be their faults mentally, they are faultless physically, for you never saw a Greek peasant in an ungraceful attitude, however much he might be off his guard and unconscious of your gaze. Gracefulness is a part of the Greek nature. So let the Lord Jesus Christ be so woven and intertwisted into your very self that you cannot be otherwise than Christ-like under any circumstances. Lord, grant us this. It would be a glorious thing to be saturated through and through with the spirit of Christ, so as to live Christ evermore.

That eminent ornithologist, M. Audubon, who produced accurate drawings and descriptions of all the birds of the American Continent, made the perfection of that work the one object of his life. In order to achieve this he had to earn his own living by painting portraits, and other

labors. He had to traverse frozen seas, forests, canebrakes, jungles, prairies, mountains, swollen rivers, and pestilential bogs. He exposed himself to perils of every sort and underwent hardships of every kind. Now, whatever Audubon was doing, he was fighting his way toward his one object--the production of his history of American birds. Whether he was painting a lady's portrait, paddling a canoe, shooting a raccoon, or felling a tree--his one goal was his bird book.

He had said to himself, "I mean to carve my name among the naturalists as having produced a complete ornithological work of America." This resolution ate him up and subdued his whole life. He accomplished his work because he gave himself wholly to it. This is the way in which the Christian man should make Christ his element. All that he does should be subservient to this one thing--"That I may finish my course with joy, that I may deliver my testimony for Christ, that I may glorify God whether I live or die."

We have thus seen what it is to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Let us stop a moment to remind you that this text administers a severe rebuke to many professed Christians. Too many Church members do nothing in Christ's name. Since the day when they were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, they have done nothing else in that name. Ah, hypocrites! Ah, hypocrites! God have mercy upon you! Alas, how many others do but very little in Christ's name! I noted in a letter, by a certain pastor--not, I think, given to speaking severely, this remark--that he did not think in his own Church one in three of the members were doing anything for Christ.

I could not speak so sorrowfully as that concerning you, but I much fear that a large proportion of the strength of this Church is not used for the Lord. I believe that there is more used here than in almost any other Church, but still there is a great deal of wasted steam, a great

deal of buried talent, and thereby Jesus is defrauded. I noticed in an American paper an observation made concerning the Baptist Churches of North Carolina. A man acquainted with them said, "There are a hundred thousand members reported in the various associations. There are a hundred thousand baptized persons, and seventy-five thousand of them are only 'baptized dead heads.' "

It is an American term, but I am afraid we shall have to import it, for it is frightfully true that numbers of professors are just so many "baptized dead heads." They are of no use. They are not working. They are perhaps grumbling--the only sign of life they have--but they are neither giving of their substance nor laying out any other talents in the cause of Christ. If there are any such present, I pray that this text may be a thorn in your side and act as a spur to you. And may you from this day on do all that lies in your power in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The text also rebukes those Christians who do much in the name of some eminent Christian man. I shall not censure any particular denomination, but if the Truth censures them, let them hear it. When George Whitfield refused to form a new sect, and said, "Let my name perish, and let Christ's name last forever," he acted as his Lord would have him. Paul was not crucified for you, neither did Apollos die for you! Therefore take none of these names--but let the name of Christ be named among you--and under that name be known!

Though there is a Lutheran Church, it was a good saying of Luther, though couched in rugged words, "I desire above all things that my name should be concealed. That none be called by the name of Lutheran, but of Christian. What is Luther? My doctrine is not mine, but Christ's. I was not crucified for any. How comes it to pass, that I, who am but a filthy, stinking bag of worms, that any of the sons of God should be

denominated from my name? Away with these schismatic names. Let us be denominated from Christ, from Whom alone we have our doctrine." It shall be well for all Churches when they are ruled by the like spirit. Names which indicate their difference of doctrine will probably survive till Christ comes, but the names of men they will do well to discard.

Once more--what a rebuke is our text to those professors who dishonor the name under which they profess to live! The Spaniards in America acted so cruelly, and with such a dreadful lust for gold, that when they sent their missionaries to convert the Indians, the Indians wished only to know whether the religion that was taught them was the religion of the Spaniards--for if it were they should like to believe something the very opposite. And if there was no Heaven but where the Spaniards went, they would sooner go to Hell than be with them.

Truly some professors' lives give much the same savor to the Christian religion. Men say, "Are these Christians, these mean, covetous, quarrelsome, domineering, boastful people? Then we will sooner be infidels than Christians." Out upon you, you caricatures of godliness! If there is one such here, may his conscience prick him. You have crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame. How dreadful will be your punishment if you die in your present state! Repent of your sin and ask of God Grace to make your profession sincere.

And if you will not do this, at least be honest enough to give up your false profession--for you do but degrade it and yourself. There is no necessity, surely, to add to your innumerable sins, this sin of hypocrisy. What do you gain by it? No, Sir, if you must serve mammon and the devil, serve them. But why with supererogation of iniquity must you pretend to serve Christ?

II. We leave this first point, and find in the second part of the text, HOLY MUSIC PRESCRIBED. "Giving thanks

unto God the Father by Him." Soldiers march best to battle when the trumpet and drum excite them with enlivening strains. The mariner brightens his toil by a cheery cry at every pull of the rope. And it is an excellent thing when Christian men know how to sing as well as to work, and mingle holy music with holy service. The best music of a Christian consists in thankfulness to God.

Thanks should be rendered by the Believer with all the acts common to men. Our eating, our drinking, our social meetings, our quiet conversations with one with another--in all we should give thanks unto God the Father. This we should do in the labors peculiar to our vocation. Whatever your trade and calling may be, if you cannot sing aloud, you can sing in your hearts while your hands are busy. You can ring out the praises of God as well to the sound of the hammer on the anvil as to the peal of the organ. Your feet at the sewing machine may beat time to a sacred tune.

You can as well praise God while you crack your whip as when you sing a Psalm. Why not? If the heart is right you can mount up to the heavens from any place or labor. Whatever your calling may be you shall find some peculiarity in it which shall help you to magnify God, if you will but use a spiritual eye to discover it.

We ought especially to praise God in the exercise of our religion. Whenever the assemblies of God's people meet, there should be much of holy joy. Some people are so afraid of joy that one might suppose them to labor under the delusion that all who are devout must also be unhappy. If we worshipped Baal, to lance ourselves with knives were most fitting. If we were worshippers of Juggernaut or Kalee, self-inflicted tortures might be acceptable. If we adored the pope, it might be proper for us to wear a hair shirt and practice flagellation. But we worship the ever-blessed God, whose delight is to make His

creatures happy!

Holy happiness is a part of worship, and joy in the Lord one of the accepted Graces of the Holy Spirit. Brethren, let us be happy when we praise God. I have noticed with pain the way in which people will get rid, if they can, of happy words out of their hymns. The hundredth Psalm for instance, runs thus--

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with_"

What? Well, they modernize it into--

"Him serve with fear." But, as I believe, the older form is--

"Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come you before Him and rejoice." I am amazed some other scribe did not cut out the word "cheerful," and put in--

"Sing to the Lord with doleful voice." In this way the Psalm might have been "improved" until there would not have been a grain of worship left in it. I mean to sing it, "Him serve with mirth." And with a glad and merry heart will I praise my God. If you are His child, rejoice in your Father's Presence. If you are pardoned, rejoice in the mercy that washed away your sins. Even if you are tried and troubled, rejoice that your afflictions are working together for your good! "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, Rejoice."

The text tells us under what aspect we should regard God when we are thus thanking Him, "Giving thanks unto God the Father," blessing Him that He stands in that relation to us as well as to the Lord Jesus. The belief in the Divine fatherhood will surely make the sons of God happy. It is instructive to observe that thanks are directed to be offered especially to the Father. I suppose because we are most apt to forget to praise the Father. We love Jesus Christ for dying for us. We forget

not the Holy Spirit because He dwells in us. But the common idea of the Father is dishonoring to Him.

Is He not regarded as all Justice, and seldom as the Fountain of Love? Now, it is the Father who stands at the back of all in the eternal purpose. It is the Father who gave the Son to die. It is the Father who justifies us through the righteousness of Christ, and adopts us into His family. The Father is equally to be loved and worshipped with the Spirit and the Son. And through Jesus Christ we should come to God, the terrible God as He was to us in our ungodliness, and worship Him as the Father now with thankful joy, because of the mercies we have received.

The gist of this second precept is that you stir up your hearts, my dear Friends, to the cultivation of a cheerful spirit. That you excite that cheerful spirit to the use of thankful words, telling your friends and neighbors of the goodness of God to you. These words should be oftentimes elevated into songs. These songs should, as on wings of flame, ascend up to where perfect spirits praise God both day and night. O, we that love the Savior, do not neglect this, "Whoso offers praise glorifies God." Glorify Him, then.

This praise, this cheerful spirit wins others. They, marking how you give thanks, will be attracted to your Savior and your God--while you will strengthen yourselves, also--for "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Despondency and murmuring will hamper you in all your efforts to glorify Christ, but to maintain an inward spring of thanksgiving is one of the best ways to keep yourselves in spiritual health. God help you, then, to carry out both these precepts--

"Work and praise! Hearts upraise!
Drink your fill of joy!
Happy they who all the day
Spend in Christ's employ.

For their song makes them strong,

Ready for their toil;

And their mirth, not of earth,

Sorrow cannot spoil."

III. A few words upon the third point, namely, HOLY MOTIVE TO BE INSCRIBED upon our hearts to secure obedience. These motives are four. A word on each.

Beloved in Christ, you have received all you have from God the Father through Christ. That you are not in Hell is due to His longsuffering. That you have been spiritually quickened is due to His gracious operation. That you are pardoned is due to His precious blood. Owing all to Him, what arises in your mind but gratitude? And what is the dictate of gratitude? Does it not teach you that it is your reasonable service to surrender yourselves to Him who bought you at such a price? For, ah, what a return it will be--how poor compared with what He has done for you! If you give your body to be burned for Him, yet He deserves infinitely more than all the sacrifices of the most painful death to recompense His stoop from the highest Throne in Glory to the Cross of the deepest woe. Let your gratitude compel you to do everything for Jesus.

Reflect, too, that the Well-Beloved for whom I plead today is worthy. "Him has God the Father exalted." Do you object to that exaltation? Should you not rather rejoice in it? Is not that song most true -- "Worthy is He that once was slain, The Prince of Peace that groaned and died; Worthy to rise, and live, and reign, AtHis Almighty Father's side"? Will you deny, then, to Christ that which He is worthy to receive? He deserves the crowns of angels, and the songs of all the perfected! Will you not give Him the best you have, even your hearts? I appeal to the justice which I trust governs your judgment--should not

Jesus Christ be the one object of your life?

Further, many of us here present have professed to be His disciples. We remember well the day when we were buried with Him in Baptism unto death. We voluntarily came forward and we took upon ourselves to be immersed in His name, copying His example and obeying His command. If that act meant anything, it meant this--that we professed ourselves to be dead henceforth to the world and risen with Christ. Now, by the profession then made, by the communion then enjoyed, I pray you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the Master's name. Let not this appeal to your honor be forgotten.

Lastly, I need not thus plead with some of you, for your hearts are pleading with you. I know you love Him whose name is as ointment poured forth. I know how the tendrils of your heart have entwined themselves about His Cross. His Person fixes all your love. You are only happy when you are walking in communion with Him. He is the sun of your soul, without whom you cannot live. Well, then, do what love dictates--bring forth the alabaster box of ointment, break it, pour the sacred nard upon His head, and if any ask, "Why is this waste?" say that He is worthy of it--and that you love much because you have had much forgiven.

This day bring forth the best that is within your store, the spiced wine of your pomegranate, and set it before your Lord, while Jesus sups with you and you with Him. Again I say arouse yourselves to live at a more vigorous rate, and let the whole of the force and energy that dwells within you, and all that you can borrow from the seventh Heaven, be given up to Him who loved you and gave Himself for you. May my Master's blessing be with these words, to all who hear or read them, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 6

Work in Us and Work by Us

(No. 914)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily." Colossians 1:29.

THE Apostle Paul could very truthfully assert that he labored and agonized. When the Holy Spirit had anointed the Apostles they all became ardent enthusiasts for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom. Having the whole world committed to them that they might enlighten it, they labored most ardently--each one in his sphere to spread abroad the Truth of the Gospel--but the Apostle of the Gentiles labored more abundantly than they all. Into how many countries did he carry the testimony of Christ? How often did he cross the sea, traverse mountains, and ford rivers?

One sees in his career something more than an ordinary Christian life. He was so indefatigable in service that surely, nothing beyond could have been possible to humanity, even under the help of God. His public labors were not only abundant, but they were the cause of continual inward conflict. He never preached a sermon, wrote an Epistle, or attempted a work without earnest prayer and soul-consuming zeal. Night and day with tears he said of a certain Church that he had labored for its good. He was a man so whole-hearted and intense in all that he did, that we ought to remember not merely the amount of his labors, but the way in which he wore himself out by the intensity of his zeal in them. Probably no other man led a more intensely ardent life than he.

Moreover, added to all this, he carried a weight of care enough to crush him. For there came upon him the care of all the Churches--to plant them, to defend them against rising errors, to prevent schisms from dividing the flock. To lead the converts from Grace to Grace, to instruct them, and to present everyone perfect before God. The burden resting upon the Apostle was greater than the cares of an empire.

And then, as if to complete the whole, he was called to suffer persecutions of which he has given us a list. A list of which, as we read it, makes us shudder that one man should have endured so much--and makes us also glory in humanity that it should be possible that so much should be borne and done for God by a single individual.

Yet, note it well, the Apostle takes no honor to himself. He humbly ascribes whatever he had done, or suffered, entirely to his Lord. He declares that he labored and agonized, but he confesses that it was through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who mightily by the Holy Spirit worked in him. In another place, when he had mentioned his abundant labors, he added, "Yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me." He remembered where to put the crown. He took care not to steal an atom of the glory for himself. He ascribed all to the power of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him.

Let us imitate the Apostle in these two things. My Brethren, let us live, while we live, a life of energy. But let us at the same time confess, when we have done all, that we are unprofitable servants. And if there is any glory, any praise resulting from the work which we achieve, let us be careful to lay it all at the Redeemer's feet.

The doctrine of the text upon which I intend to preach this morning, as I may be enabled, is this--it is clear from what Paul has here said that the work of Christ in us and for us does not exempt as from work and service, nor does the Holy Spirit's work supersede human effort,

but rather excites it. Paul speaks of an inner work, a mighty work worked in him, but he also declares, "whereunto I also labor, striving." So that the doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is not intended in any degree to lull our minds into sloth, but wherever the Holy Spirit works He makes men work.

He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, that we also may work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. I shall try to illustrate this Truth in two respects. First, in reference to a man's own salvation. And secondly, in the matter of the Christian man's ministry for the salvation of others. The work of the Holy Spirit does not supersede Christian effort in either case.

I. First, then, IN THE BELIEVER'S SALVATION. We believe, each one of us, and we have Scriptural warrant for it, that if any man is saved, the work within his soul is entirely worked by the Holy Spirit. Man is dead in sin, and the dead cannot raise themselves from the grave. Quickening and spiritual resurrection must be accomplished by Divine power. Man must be born again, and this birth must be effected by Divine power, for unless a man is born from Above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

As the commencement of salvation is dependent upon the Holy Spirit, so is the carrying of it on. "Without Me you can do nothing," is Christ's testimony. We shall never persevere except as Grace shall keep us from falling, nor may we hope to be presented faultless before the august Presence except as the Holy Spirit shall sanctify us from day to day, and make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. I trust, my Brethren, I need not do more than assert this doctrine in your hearing, since you know how continually we insist upon it, and our trumpet never gives an uncertain sound as to the great Truth that God works all our works in us, and that salvation is of the

Lord from first to last.

But at this present time we intend to insist upon this further Truth of God--that the working of the Holy Spirit in us does not exempt the Believer from the most energetic labor, but rather necessitates his doing all that lies in him. To enforce this we remark, first, that the Christian life is always described as a thing of energy. Sometimes we read of it as a pilgrimage. That master allegorist, John Bunyan, has not pictured Christian as carried to Heaven while asleep in an easy chair. He makes Christian lose his burden at the foot of the Cross. He ascribes the deliverance of the man from the burden of his sin entirely to the Lord Jesus, but he represents him as climbing the Hill Difficulty. Yes, and on his hands and knees, too, Christian has to descend into the Valley of Humiliation, and to tread that dangerous pathway through the gloomy horrors of the Shadow of Death. He has to be urgently watchful to keep himself from sleeping in the Enchanted Ground. Nowhere is he delivered from the necessities incident to the way, for even at the last he fords the black river and struggles with its terrible billows.

Effort is used all the way through, and you that are pilgrims to the skies will find it to be no allegory, but a real matter of fact. Your soul must gird up her loins. You need your pilgrim's staff and armor, and you must foot it all the way to Heaven, contending with giants, fighting with lions, and combating Apollyon himself.

Our life is in Scripture represented as a race which is even sterner work than pilgrimage. In such footraces as were witnessed among the Greeks, in every case the man spent all the strength there was in him, and underwent a training beforehand that he might be fit for the contest. It sometimes happened, and indeed not seldom, that men fell dead at the winning-post, through their extreme exertions. Running to

Heaven is such running as that--we are to strain every nerve. We shall require all the power we have, and more, in order to win that incorruptible crown which now glitters before the eyes of our faith. If we are so to run that we may obtain, we shall have no energy to spare, but shall spend it all in our heavenly course.

Not infrequently the Apostle compares our spiritual life to a boxing match, and the terms in the original Greek, if they were translated into pure vernacular English, would remind us very much of a boxing ring and of the place where wrestlers strive for mastery. To wit, in that notable passage, "I keep under my body," we are told by scholars that the Greek word alludes to the getting of the antagonist's head under the arm and dealing it heavy blows. So the flesh must be mortified. Now the wrestlers in the Greek and Roman games strained every muscle and sinew, too--there was no part of the body that was not brought into action to overthrow their adversary.

For this they agonized till often blood would spurt from the nostrils, and veins would burst. Such, in a spiritual sense, must be the agony of a Christian if he is to overcome temptation and subdue the power of sin. Ah Brethren, it is no child's play to win Heaven! Saved, as I repeat it, through the power of Christ's blood and with the energy of His Holy Spirit within us, yet we have no time to loiter, no space in which to trifle. We must labor, striving according to His working who works in us mightily. All the figures which represent the Christian life imply the most energetic exertion.

Secondly, be it remarked that there is no illustration used in Scripture to set forth the heavenly life which allows the supposition that in any case Heaven is won by sloth. I do not remember ever finding in Scripture the life of the Christian described as a slumber. To the sluggard I find a warning always--thorns and thistles in his

garden--and rags and disease in his person. "The hand of the diligent makes rich." There may be occasional opportunities by which even idle men may become wealthy, but such spiritual wealth I have never heard of. I find that wherever the Spirit of God comes upon men, it never leaves a saved man effortless or fruitless, but as soon as it descends upon him, according to his capacity he begins to work out his own salvation.

Remember the question of the inspired writer, "Likewise also was not Rahab, the harlot, justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" Her faith saved her. And though it was very weak and very ignorant faith, it made her work--and therefore she hid the spies to save their lives. Look at the dying thief, with his hands and feet fastened to the wood, and ready to expire, yet he rebuked the reviling malefactor. Thus doing all he possibly could for his Lord, in Whom he trusted for salvation, what more could he have done? It May be said of him, "He has done what he could." It shall be well if as much can be said for us.

No, Brethren, you cannot be carried to Heaven on "flowery beds of ease." You must fight if you would reign. You must stem the flood, you must breast the waves if you mean to reach the further shore. Divine Grace will help you, else were the work an impossibility. But even with the aid of Divine Grace you are not permitted to slumber into Glory, nor sleep your way to the celestial throne. You must be up and doing, watching diligently, lest any man fail of the Grace of God. The trumpet sounds, and not the dulcimer--the call is to conflict--not to feasting.

I would next bid you note, dear Friends, that it is natural it should be so. It is unavoidable in the nature of things that when the Holy Spirit comes He should not beget a spirit of slumber, but awaken us to diligent action. It is natural, I say, because one of the first results

of the Holy Spirit's entrance into a man's heart is to let him see his sin and his danger. If I feel myself guilty and perceive that God is angry with me and that I shall be cast by-and-by into the Lake of Fire, what is the inevitable result? Shall I not hear a voice crying, "Escape for your life! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain"?

Wherever the Holy Spirit works a sense of sin, the sinner is constrained to cry, "What must I do to be saved?" Never does the Spirit effectually show a man his sin and then leave him to fold his arms and ask for "a little more sleep and a little more slumber." No, the awakened soul exclaims, "I am guilty, I am accursed of God. How can I escape? Lord help me, help me now to find rest if rest is to be found!"

Then the Holy Spirit farther reveals to us the excellence of the salvation of Christ, the happiness of those who rest in Jesus, the future reward of such as serve God on earth.

And what is the result? The enlightened soul cries, "I desire to find this pearl of great price! I desire to be enriched by an interest in Christ! I too, would, with the blessed, take my everlasting heritage."

Don't you see, then, that the Holy Spirit cannot make a man appreciate salvation without at the same time creating a desire to gain it? And out of which desire arises prayer for the promised blessing. After a man has found Christ to the pardon of his sin, the Holy Spirit is pleased to endear Christ more and more to him. It is the office of the spirit to take of the things of Christ and show them to us.

Now, my Brethren, you know very well that whenever you have a sight of the preciousness of Christ, you are moved at once to glorify Him. Do you not cry --

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills Their lasting silence break, And all harmonious human tongues The Sa vior's praises speak"?

I know it is so! It is because we think so little of Christ that we do

so little for Him. But when Christ is brought with vivid power home to the mind, then at once we cry, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" And we, by His Grace, bestir ourselves to honor Him.

Brethren, the fact that the Holy Spirit is working in a man never can be a reason for his not working. On the contrary, the moment a man perceives that the Spirit is helping him, he is encouraged diligently to labor. "Why," says he, "my work may fail, but if it is the Spirit's work it cannot fail." I bow my knee in prayer, and if I believe that all acceptable prayer is worked in me by the Holy Spirit, I am fully assured that God will not refuse to grant what He Himself, by His Spirit suggests to me to ask. If the Holy One of Israel Himself breaks my heart and leads me to long after a Savior, surely He does not intend to tantalize me.

He will continue His work till He has saved me. Thus encouraged, a man is certain to give diligence to make his calling and election sure.

Moreover every intelligent man feels that if he does not work when the Spirit of God is working in him, he is dishonoring that Divine Person, and is running the solemn peril of committing the sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven him. He feels that if he should be slothful that text would condemn him, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Neglect--mere neglect--nobody ever gets to Heaven by it. But ah, how many perish by that alone!

To conclude this point, it is most certain that all saving acts must be performed by the man himself. Faith is the gift of God, but the Holy Spirit never believed for anybody. It is not His office to believe. The sinner must believe. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit never repented. What had He to repent of? He has done no ill. It cannot be possible for Him to repent for us. No, we ourselves must repent. My Brethren, this is self-evident to every candid mind.

There must be in every man a personal faith and a personal repentance. And though these are worked in him by the Holy Spirit, yet they are his own acts. They cannot be the acts of anybody else, or else the man has not believed, and has not repented, and there is no life in him.

Right on to the end of the Christian life all those acts which bring us into communion with God are our own. For instance, the Holy Spirit helps men to pray. He helps their infirmities. But they pray. They themselves pray. Prove to me that the man does not, himself, pray, and I will be bold to tell you that he is not saved. The intercession of Christ is prevalent, but it will not save those who live and die without praying for themselves. True desires after God must be your own desires. The desire is worked in you, but still it is yours. And the expression of that desire is helped by the teaching of the Spirit, but still it is your own expression, or else what are you but a dead soul? There must be a voluntary putting forth on your part of the life which is quickened in you by the Spirit. This is so plain as to be self-evident.

Note again, if we were not made active, but are simply acted on by the Holy Spirit, there is a reduction of manhood to materialism. If the man does not believe nor pray, and if spiritual acts are not a man's own acts, but the acts of another in him, then what is the man? There is no moral good or moral evil in a work which is not my own--I mean no moral good or evil to me. A work which I do not myself perform may be creditable or discreditable to somebody else, it is neither to me.

Take an illustration. In the Square of St. Mark, at Venice, at certain hours the bell of the clock is struck by two bronze figures as large as life, wielding hammers. Now, nobody ever thought of presenting thanks to those bronze men for the diligence with which they have struck the hours. Of course not, they cannot help it--they are worked upon by

machinery--and they strike the hours from necessity. Some years ago a stranger was upon the top of the tower, and incautiously went too near one of these bronze men. It was time to strike the hour and he knocked the stranger from the battlement of the tower and killed him.

Nobody said the bronze man ought to be hanged--nobody ever laid it to his charge at all. There was no moral good or moral evil, because there was no will in the concern. It was not a moral act, because no mind and heart gave consent to it. Am I to believe that Grace reduces men to this? I tell you, Sirs, if you think to glorify the Grace of God by such a theory, you know not what you do. To carve blocks, and move logs is small glory--but this is the glory of God's Grace-- that without violating the human will, He yet achieves His own purposes, and treating men as men, He conquers their hearts with love, and wins their affections by His Divine Grace.

I warn any here present who imagine that man is a merely passive being in salvation against putting their theory in practice. I am alarmed for you if you say, "God will save me if He so decrees, and therefore I will sit still and wait." My Hearer, I am afraid for you! You are neglecting the great salvation, and I again remind you of the warning--"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" I confess, I have no hope for you. But on the contrary, if you cry, "Lord, save, or I perish," I have good hope for you, you shall not perish--the Spirit of God is working in you these desires and this longing and seeking.

Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. I pray you check not your aspirations. Quench not the Spirit. Led and guided by His mighty working, come to the foot of Christ's Cross. Trust alone to Him, and a voice shall sound in your heart, "Your sins which are many, are all forgiven you." God grant it may be so.

II. We shall now turn to the second part of our subject in reference to THE MINISTRY OF THE SAINTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF OTHERS. The Holy Spirit alone can convert a soul. All the ministries in the world put together, be they what they may, are utterly powerless for the salvation of a single soul apart from the Holy Spirit. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord." But wherever the Holy Spirit works, as a general rule (so general that I scarcely know an exception), it is in connection with the earnest efforts of Christian men.

This is clear, first, from the example of the text. The Apostle Paul certifies that the salvation of souls is the sole work of Christ, but he declares that he labored, and the next word he adds "striving," or as in the Greek, "agonizing." Though the Spirit did the work, it was in connection with the Apostle's labor and agony for souls. Now, my Brethren, laboring implies abundant work. No man can be said to labor who only does half an hour's work in a day. A man who is a thorough laborer makes long hours, and is ever at it. The Apostle Paul was this. The winning of souls was not a piece of by-play with him. It was his one object to which he consecrated everything. He was "in labors more abundant." In the morning he sowed his seed, and in the evening he withheld not his hand. If we are to have souls saved we must do the same. No tradesman expects his shop to prosper who has it open only one hour a day--and you must not expect to be soul-winners if you only now and then seek to be such. There must be, as far as time and capacity allow, the consecration of yourselves to this work, even to an abundance of effort.

Labor, again, means hard work. It is not trifling. He is no laborer who takes the spade to play with it as a little child upon the sand. He that labors works till the sweat streams from his face. And he that

would win souls will find that, though it is all of the Holy Spirit, yet it involves on his part the sternest form of spiritual work. Baxter used to say if any minister found his ministry easy, he would find it hard to answer for it at the Day of Judgment. And I add, if any one of you teaching in your classes, or officiating in any form of Christian work, find it easy, you will find it hard to give an account of your stewardship at the Lord's coming.

The labor must be personal labor, for no man is a laborer who does it through his servants. He may be an employer, and in a certain sense he may be said to do the work, but he cannot say, "I labor." The Apostle performed personal work. Ah, Brethren, the power of the Church very much lies under God in the personal influence of her members. On this platform I feel that I am a long way off from you. I wish I could devise some mode of speech by which I could thrust my hand into your hearts and get my soul to pulsate close by yours to make you feel what I feel.

Between the pulpit and the pew there is too often a great gulf fixed. But you who get your friends into the parlor and talk concerning eternal things--you have a fine opportunity. Your personal influence then bears with mighty force upon the person with whom you are speaking, and you may hope that a blessing will be the result. Learn from your adversaries. What is the strength of the fools of Rome? What but their conversing with men and women by themselves at the confessional? Who could not prevail, with such an instrument? We, with nobler ends and aims, must use personal, private conversation in all honest earnestness to bring men to repentance, to faith, and to the foot of the Cross.

My Brethren, I do not believe that even this will suffice. Abundant Christian work, and hard Christian work, and personal Christian work

must have combined with it inward soul conflict. If your soul never breaks for another, you will not be the means of breaking that other's heart. But when it comes to this, "I must have that soul saved, I cannot bear the thought that it should be cast away"--you are near winning that soul. Suppose it is your child, your unconverted husband, or your brother--and you are enabled to say in yourself, "I have continual heaviness for my kinsmen according to the flesh"--so that you could almost sacrifice your own soul if they might but be saved?

When it comes to tears, the Lord will not deny you. My Brothers, when your heart breaks with love to souls, they shall be yours. But there must be conflicts. I pity that minister whose life is one of uninterrupted spiritual ease. What? Can we see you backslide and not weep till you come back to the Cross? Can I know that among these thousands who are listening to my voice, perhaps half are dead in trespasses and sins--and can I be insensible as a marble statue? Then God have mercy upon me as well as upon you! Unhappy souls to be entrusted to the care of one so utterly unfit for such a service!

No, the heart must be stirred, there must be an anguishing and yearning for souls. They tell us that in the sea certain waves rise from the bottom, and these cause the ground swells and the breakers. There must be great ground swells of desire within us that souls may, by some means, be delivered from the wrath to come. And where these deep searching of the heart are found, there will be conversions. Where these four things of which we have spoken are the result of the Holy Spirit working in any of you, it is as certain that souls will be saved as that spring will follow when the sun returns from his southern tropic.

We must further note that this is plain from the work itself. For, Brethren, souls are not converted as a rule without previous prayer for

them on the part of someone or another. Well, then, we must be stirred up to prayer, and the praying which God hears is not that of people half asleep. The petitions which pierce the ears of God are not those that fall from

careless lips. They must come from your heart or they will never go to His heart. The importunate pleader prevails with Heaven. Souls are saved instrumentally through teaching, but the teaching which saves souls is never cold, dead teaching. God may occasionally bless such words, for He does great wonders, but as a rule the teaching that convinces and enlightens is earnest and enthusiastic.

We have heard of a traveler who, journeying onward, met with one who said, "Sir, the night is dark, and I should not advise you to go on to the river, for the bridge is broken in the middle. You will be in the stream before you know it." This was said in so careless a tone that the traveler went on. He was met sometime afterwards, fortunately for him, by another who again warned him--"The bridge is broken! Don't go on, you will be sure to lose your life if you attempt it. You cannot ford the stream and the bridge is broken." The traveler replied, "Why, I have been told that tale before, but the man who told me it spoke in such a tone that I could see through him, I knew it was all a hoax." "Oh, but Sir," said the other, "it is true! I have but now escaped myself. I am sure it is true!" "But," said the traveler, "I am not so easily scared." "Well, then," said the other, "I beseech you once again, do not go on, for you will perish," and rushing up to him he said, "I will not let you go." He grasped him and held him fast. "Now," said the other, "I believe you have spoken the truth, and I will turn with you." So there are some who warn souls of their danger in such a careless tone that they create an unbelief which many an earnest tongue will not be able to dispel.

But if you get hold of the soul and say to it, "I will not let you perish." If you say to your friends as Whitfield would say to his congregation, "If you perish it shall not be for want of praying for you. It shall not be for want of weeping over you. If you are damned it shall not be because my heart was cold towards you," you will win them--they will be led to believe, by His Grace, from your earnestness. Who knows how many earnest spirits you may bring to Jesus? Praying and teaching, if effectual, must be earnest. And therefore when the Spirit comes to save the sons of men He always gives us earnest praying men and earnest teachers.

But, Brethren, teaching is not all. We must come to persuasion with men, and that persuasion must be very persevering. Certain men we must dog day after day with our entreaties. Some souls will not come with one invitation, they must therefore be plied with many. I remember a minister who went to see a dying laborer, and the man growled from his bed, "Tell him to be gone--I want none of the likes of him to disturb me." He called again, and received the same rude answer. He called again, and went halfway up the stairs. He heard an oath, and would not intrude. He continued to call till he had numbered twenty times, and the twenty-first time the man said, "Well, as you are so set on it, you may come in," and he did go in, and that soul was won for God! Humanly speaking, where had that man been but for persevering zeal? When the Lord means to save men by you, He will give you perseverance in seeking them. He will work in you mightily by His Spirit. You will feel a determination, that twist and turn as they may with indefatigable earnestness of self-destruction, you will still pursue them if by any means you may prevent their everlasting misery. Earnest zeal is a natural result of the Holy Spirit's working upon the souls of men. Whenever the Spirit of God comes, He sanctifies in men the natural

instinct which leads them to wish others to be like themselves. Whether a man is bad or good, he seeks to make others like himself. The Holy Spirit lays hold of this and constrains Christians to desire to bring others to their state of mind.

This done, He arouses in the Christian mind the commendable principle of love to our fellow men. Having experienced the blessedness of salvation for ourselves, we desire to see others enjoying like happiness. The patriot's bosom glows with the same passion as before, but now it is refined and purified, and he prays for his nation that not only it may be free, but that the Spirit of God may make it free, indeed. The Holy Spirit bestirs in us the impulse of gratitude, "Has Christ saved me?" Then the man exclaims, "I will live for Him!" The Spirit gives impetus to that suggestion, and we resolve that since Jesus has loved us so, we will give to Him all that we are, and all that we have.

In addition to this, the Holy Spirit sanctifies many other natural emotions. Such, for instance, that which we sometimes call the esprit de corps, by which men are moved to desire the prosperity of the community to which they belong. The Holy Spirit makes us feel one with Christ's Church and we ardently desire her success. A holy emulation as to which shall serve the Master most runs through our ranks--not that we may get honor--but that we may honor Him. We cannot endure it that our Brethren should go to the war and we sit still. We begin to be afraid lest the denunciation should go forth against us, "Curse you Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they

came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Inspired by such feelings we rush to the fight that we may rescue souls for Christ.

Then the Spirit in some men--I pray it may be in your case, my dear Friends--sheds abroad the love of Christ at such a rate that the soul is all on fire to exalt Christ. No, in some He has made this sacred passion to eat them up till they have been consumed with holy zeal. Like men inspired, like ancient Apostles, certain choice spirits have lived the life of Christ on earth with an awful vehemence of enthusiasm. Wherever such men are raised up, God is about to save souls! Whenever you listen to a man who is carried away by an all-consuming desire for the glory of God, you may conclude that he is the instrument of God to thousands. His lips shall feed many, he shall be the spiritual progenitor of tribes of Believers. Thus where the Spirit of God comes, energy is evinced and souls are saved. And we do not find it otherwise.

I would have you notice, once more, that the whole history of the Church confirms what I have stated. When the Holy Spirit descended, there were two signs of His Presence. The one was a rushing mighty wind, the other was the tongue of fire. Now if the Holy Spirit intended to do all the work Himself--without using us as earnest instruments--the first emblem would have been stagnant air. And the next might have been a mass of ice, or what you will, but certainly not a tongue of fire. The first emblem was not only wind, but it was a mighty wind, and not only that, but a rushing mighty wind, as if to show us that He intended to set every spiritual sail in the most rapid motion.

And as birds are drifted before the gale, so would He impel His people forward with His mighty influences. The other emblem was fire, a consuming, devouring, imperial element. May we be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and in fire--and so we shall know what is meant by the symbol.

Our Lord's commencement of the Gospel ministry was signalized by vehemence. Here is His own experience, "From the days of John the

Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Christ's ministry and life were notably earnest, He was clad with zeal as with a cloak.

His Apostles, also, were men so vehement that in their earliest deliverances they were thought to be drunken with wine. Every era of the Church's prosperity has been marked by this same holy violence. Hear Chrysostom speak, he is no player upon a goodly instrument, he gives forth no dulcet tones for gentle ears. Listen to his denunciation of the Empress Eudoxia! Hear how he denounces the sins of the times! How vehemently he calls upon men to escape for their lives because of coming judgment!

Listen to Augustine, his vehement tones you will not soon forget. Turn to the notable era of the Reformation. The men who worked the Reformation were no dullards, no men of polite speech, of elegant and dainty sentences. Luther was a type of them all, vehement to the extreme of vehemence. I say not that their natural violence was the power which worked the Reformation, but that the Holy Spirit made their hearts vehement, and so they worked marvels. And we, dear Brethren--if we are to see in these days a genuine revival of religion, worthy of the name--must return to the old enthusiasm which once made the Church fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. O that we may live to see it, and the Lord's name shall be glorified!

The conclusion of the whole matter is just this--let us combine the two things of which we have spoken. Dear Brethren, let us rely upon the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit only. Let us not conduct a warfare at our own charges. Let us believe that without the Lord, nothing good can be done. But let us rest assured that Jesus is never absent where He gives the spirit of prayer, as He has given to this Church. And that He

never deserts those to whom He vouchsafes holy zeal for His kingdom, such as He has bestowed on many here present. Let us be encouraged by His Presence. Gideon, when he obtained the token of the fleece wet with dew, and when by night he heard the story of the barley cake that overturned the tents of Midian--because God was with him--did not straightway go to his home and renounce the enterprise.

No, but on the contrary, thus encouraged, he gathered together his three hundred valiant men in the darkness of the night. They broke the pitchers, bade the torches shine, and shouted the watchword, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" Even so let it be, by God's Grace, with us at this hour. Knowing that God the Holy Spirit is with us, let us lift the cry amid the midnight of our age, "The sword of the Lord and of His Son Jesus!" and we shall see what God will do, for He will surely put to flight the armies of the aliens, and get to Himself renown.

But, Brethren, let us combine with this confidence in the Holy Spirit, the most earnest effort on the part of everyone to do all he can. I have a scene before my mind's eye at this moment. I see in this Church and neighborhood the counterpart of the mountainside when the multitude were fainting for lack of bread. They must be fed, Christ willed it. The dis-

ciples must bring their barley loaves and fishes--what were they among so many? Christ must break and multiply. The disciples must receive from His hands. They must then go among the many, the fifties and the hundreds, and break the bread that Christ had blessed--for the hungry must be fed. Not only men, but women and children must be satisfied. Behold, my Brethren, this great city hungry and faint, and ready to die. Bring here, all you disciples of Christ, your loaves and fishes--I mean not to me but to the Master. What you have of ability, however

slender, bring it out. Christ will not begin to multiply till you have brought forth all you have. Miracles are not to be expected till nature is brought to a nonplus. Bring out, then, whatever of talent or Divine Grace you have--consecrate it all to Jesus--and then as He begins to multiply, stand ready as your master's servants to wait upon the crowd. And if they push and clamor, yet weary not--break the bread till every soul shall have been supplied.

Go on, go on, and do not say the toil is hard! It is so blessed to do good to others--it is thrice blessed--no, sevenfold blessed, to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and save a soul from death! No, weary not, though you have been so long at it that your spirit is faint. My Brother, your physical frame is weary, but be of good cheer. Do you not hear them? Hearken, I pray you! Up yonder, there are angels bending from their thrones, and I think I hear them say, "How blessed a work to feed the hungry, and those men, how honored to be permitted to hand round the Master's precious gifts! Do they not whisper, "We would gladly be with them"?

One bright spirit thinks he would exchange his crown with the meanest of the disciples, if he might share the service of Gospel teaching! Might they not envy you--those blessed harpers upon the sea of glass--because you can do what they cannot? You can tell of Jesus, you can fetch in the prodigals, you can find the lost jewels for the Master's crown!

I charge you, my Brethren, by the living God--unless your religion is hypocrisy--help me this month, help my Brethren, the Elders and Deacons, help us everyone of you. By the blood that bought you, if you are, indeed, redeemed-- by the Holy Spirit that is in you, except you be reprobates--by everything that God in loving kindness has done for you--I charge you come to the help of the Master in this, the hopeful

hour.

So may the Lord do unto you as you shall deal with us this day. If you shall, indeed, consecrate yourselves to Him, and serve Him, may He enrich you with the increase of God, and may the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds. But if you refuse your service, the Lord shall judge you. He that knows his Master's will and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.

Chapter 7

Sinners Bound with the Cords of Sin

A Sermon

(No. 915)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, February 13th, 1870, by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins."--Proverbs 5:22.

THE first sentence has reference to a net, in which birds or beasts are taken. The ungodly man first of all finds sin to be a bait, and, charmed by its apparent pleasantness he indulges in it, and then he becomes entangled in its meshes so that he cannot escape. That which first attracted the sinner, afterwards detains him. Evil habits are soon formed, the soul readily becomes accustomed to evil, and then, even if the man should have lingering thoughts of better things, and form frail resolutions to amend, his iniquities hold him captive like a bird in the fowler's snare. You have seen the foolish fly descend into the sweet which is spread to destroy him, he sips, and sips again, and by-and-by he plunges boldly in to feast himself greedily: when satisfied, he attempts to fly, but the sweet holds him by the feet and clogs his wings; he is a victim, and the more he struggles the more surely is he held. Even so is it with the sins of ungodly men, they are at first a tempting bait, and afterwards a snare. Having sinned, they become so bewitched with sin, that the scriptural statement is no exaggeration: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

The first sentence of the text also may have reference to an arrest by

an officer of law. The transgressor's own sins shall take him, shall seize him; they bear a warrant for arresting him, they shall judge him, they shall even execute him. Sin, which at the first bringeth to man a specious pleasure, ere long turneth into bitterness, remorse, and fear. Sin is a dragon, with eyes like stars, but it carrieth a deadly sting in its tail. The cup of sin, with rainbow bubbles on its brim, is black with deep damnation in its dregs. O that men would consider this, and turn from their delusions. To bring torment to the guilty, there is little need that God should, literally in the world to come, pile up Tophet with its wood and much smoke, nor even that the pit should be digged for the ungodly in order to make them miserable; sin shall of itself bring forth death. Leave a man to his own sins, and hell itself surrounds him; only suffer a sinner to do what he wills, and to give his lusts unbridled headway, and you have secured him boundless misery; only allow the seething caldron of his corruptions to boil at its own pleasure, and the man must inevitably become a vessel filled with sorrow. Be assured that sin is the root of bitterness. Gild the pill as you may, iniquity is death. Sweet is an unholy morsel in the mouth, but it will be wormwood in the bowels. Let but man heartily believe this, and surely he will not so readily be led astray. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird," and shall man be more foolish than the fowls of the air? will he wilfully pursue his own destruction? will he wrong his own soul? Sin, then, becomes first a net to hold the sinner by the force of custom and habit, and afterwards, a sheriffs officer to arrest him, and to scourge him with its inevitable results.

The second sentence of our text speaks of the sinner being holden with cords, and a parable may be readily fashioned out of the expression. The lifelong occupation of the ungodly man is to twist ropes of sin. All his sins are as so much twine and cord out of which ropes may be

made. His thoughts and his imaginations are so much raw material, and while he thinks of evil, while he contrives transgression, while he lusts after filthiness, while he follows after evil devices, while with head, and hand, and heart he pursues eagerly after mischief, he is still twisting evermore the cords of sin which are afterwards to bind him. The binding meant is that of a culprit pinioned for execution. Iniquity pinions a man, disables him from delivering himself from its power, enchains his soul, and inflicts a bondage on the spirit far worse than chaining of the body. Sin cripples all desires after holiness, damps every aspiration after goodness, and thus, fettering the man hand and foot, delivers him over to the executioner, which executioner shall be the wrath of God, but also sin itself, in the natural consequences which in every case must flow from it. Samson could burst asunder green withes and new ropes, but when at last his darling sin had bound him to his Delilah, that bond he could not snap, though it cost him his eyes. Make a man's will a prisoner, and he is a captive indeed. Determined independence of spirit walks at freedom in a tyrant's Bastille, and defies a despot's hosts; but a mind enslaved by sin builds its own dungeon, forges its own fetters, and rivets on its chains. It is slavery indeed when the iron enters into the soul. Who would not scorn to make himself a slave to his baser passions? and yet the mass of men are such--the cords of their sins bind them.

Thus, having introduced to you the truth which this verse teaches, namely, the captivating, enslaving power of sin, I shall advance to our first point of consideration. This is a solution to a great mystery; but then, secondly, it is itself a greater mystery; and when we have considered these two matters it will be time for us to note what is the practical conclusion from this line of thought.

I. First, then, the doctrine of the text, that iniquity entraps the

wicked as in a net, and binds them as with cords is A SOLUTION OF A GREAT MYSTERY.

When you and I first began to do good by telling out the gospel, we labored under the delusion that as soon as our neighbors heard of the blessed way of salvation they would joyfully receive it, and be saved in crowds. We have long ago seen that pleasant delusion dispelled; we find that our position is that of the serpent-charmer with the deaf adder, charm we ever so wisely, men will not hear so as to receive the truth. Like the ardent reformer, we have found out that old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon. We now perceive that for a sinner to receive the gospel involves a work of grace that shall change his heart and renew his nature. Yet none the less is it a great mystery that it should be so. It is one of the prodigies of the god of this world that he makes men love sin, and abide in indifference as if they were fully content to be lost. It is a marvel of marvels that man should be so base as to reject Christ, and abide in wilful and wicked unbelief. I will try and set forth this mystery, in the way in which, I dare say, it has struck many an honest hearted worker for Jesus Christ.

Is it not a mysterious thing that men should be content to abide in a state of imminent peril? Every unconverted man is already condemned. Our Lord has said it: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Every unregenerate man is not only liable to the wrath of God in the future, but the wrath of God abideth on him. It is on him now, it always will remain upon him; as long as he is what he is, it abideth on him. And yet in this state men do not start, they are not amazed or alarmed, they are not even anxious. Sabbath after Sabbath they are reminded of their unhappy position: it makes us unhappy to think they should be in such a state, but they are strangely at ease. The sword of vengeance hangs over them

by a single hair, yet sit they at their banquets, and they laugh and sport as though there were no God, no wrath to come, no certainty of appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ. See a number of persons in a train that has broken down. The guard has only to intimate that another train is approaching, and that it may perhaps dash into the carriages and mangle the passengers; he has only to give half a hint, and see how the carriage doors fly open, how the travelers rush up the embankment, each one so eager for his own preservation as to forget his fellow's. Yet here are men and women by hundreds and thousands, with the fast-rushing train of divine vengeance close behind them; they may almost hear the sound of its thundering wheels, and, lo, they sit in all quietness, exposed to present peril and in danger of a speedy and overwhelming destruction. "Tis strange. tis passing strange, tis wonderful." Here is a mystery indeed, that can only be understood in the light of the fact that these foolish beings are taken by their sing, and bound by the cords of their iniquities.

Be it ever remembered that before very long these unconverted men and women, many of whom are present this morning, will be in a stale whose wretchedness it is not possible for language fully to express. Within four-and-twenty hours their spirits may be summoned before the bar of God; and, according to this book, which partially uplifts the veil of the future, the very least punishment that can fall upon an unconverted soul will cause it "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." All they had endured, of whom it is written, that they wept and gnashed their teeth, was to be shut out into outer darkness, nothing more; no stripes had then fallen, they had not yet been shut up in the prison-house of hell, only the gate of heaven was shut, only the light of glory was hid; and straightway there was weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. What, then, will be the woe of the lost when

positive punishment is inflicted? As for what they will endure who have beard the gospel, but have wilfully rejected it, we have some faint notion from the Master's words: "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them." We know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for "our God is a consuming fire." From this platform there rings full often that question, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" And yet for all this, men are willing to pass on through time into eternity regardless of the escape which God provides, turning aside from the only salvation which can rescue them from enduring "the blackness of darkness for ever." O reason, art thou utterly fled? Is every sinner altogether brutish? If we should meet with a man condemned to die, and tell him that pardon was to be had, would he hear us with indifference? Would he abide in the condemned cell and use no means for obtaining the boon of life and liberty? Yes, there awaits the sinner a more awful doom, and a more terrible sentence, and we are sent to publish a sure pardon from the God of heaven; and yet thousands upon thousands give us no deep heartfelt attention, but turn aside and perish in their sins. O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep for the folly of the race to which I belong, and mourn over the destruction of my fellow men!

It often strikes us with wonder that men do not receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, when we recollect that the gospel is so plain. If it were a great mystery one might excuse the illiterate from attending to it. If the plan of salvation could only be discovered by the attentive perusal of a long series of volumes, and if it required a classical training and a thorough education, why then the multitude of the poor and needy, whose time is taken up with earning their bread, might have same excuse; but there is under heaven no truth more plain than this,

"He that believeth on the Lord Jesus hath everlasting life;" "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." To believe--that is, simply to trust Christ. How plain! There is no road, though it ran straight as an arrow, that can be more plain than this. Legible only by the light they give, but all so legible that be who runs may read, stand these soul-quickening words, "Believe and live." Trust Christ and your sins are forgiven; you are saved. This is so plain a precept, that I may call it a very A B C for infants, yet men receive it not. Are they not indeed holden by the cords of their sins when they refuse to obey? Moreover, brethren, there is a wonderful attractiveness in the gospel. If the gospel could possibly be a revelation of horrors piled on horrors, if there were something in it utterly inconsistent with reason, or something that shocked all the sensitive affections of our better part, we might excuse mankind, but the gospel is just this: man is lost, but God becomes man to save him, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Out of infinite love to his enemies the Son of God took upon himself human flesh, that he might suffer in the room and stead of men what they ought to have suffered. The doctrine of substitution, while it wondrously magnifies the grace of God and satisfies the justice of God, methinks ought to strike you all with love because of the disinterested affection which it reveals on Jesus Christ's part. O King of Glory, dost thou bleed for me? O Prince of Life, canst thou lie shrouded in the grave for me? Doth God stoop from his glory to be spat upon by sinful lips? Doth he stoop from the splendor of heaven to be "despised and rejected of men," that men may be saved? Why, it ought to win every human ear, it ought to entrance every human heart. Was ever love like this? Go ye to your poets, and see if they have ever imagined anything nobler than the love of Christ the Son of God for the dying sons of men! Go to your

philosophers, and see if in all their maxims they have ever taught a diviner philosophy than that of Christ's life, or ever have imagined in their pictures of what men ought to be, an heroic love like that which Christ in very deed displayed! We lift before you no gory banner that might sicken your hearts; we bring before you no rattling chains of a tyrant's domination; but we lift up Jesus crucified, and "Love" is written on the banner that is waved in the forefront of our hosts; we bid you yield to the gentle sway of love, and not to the tyranny of terror. Alas! men must be bound, indeed, and fettered fast by an accursed love to sin, or else the divine attractions of a crucified Redeemer would win their hearts.

Consider, my friends, you who love the souls of your fellow men, how marvellous it is that men should not receive the gospel when the commandment of the gospel is not burdensome! Methinks if it had been written that no man should enter heaven except by the way of martyrdom, it had been wisdom for every one of us to give our bodies to be burned, or to be stretched upon the rack; yea, if there had been no path to escape from the wrath of God, but to be flayed alive with Bartholomew, enduring present but exquisite torture, it would have been but a cheap price for an escape from wrath, and an entrance into heaven. But I find in God's word prescribed as the way of salvation, no such physical agonies. No austerities are commanded; not even the milder law which governed the Pharisee when he "fasted thrice in the week." Only this is written--"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and the precept of the Christian's life is, "Love thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." Most pleasant duties these of love! What more sweet? What more delightful than to permit the soul to flow out in streams of affection? The ways of true religion are not irksome, her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. What,

heaven given for believing? What, heaven's gate opened only for knocking, and boons all priceless bestowed for nothing but the asking? Yet they will not ask, they will not knock. Alas, my God, what creatures are men! Alas, O sin, what monsters hast thou made mankind, that they will forget their own interests, and wrong their own souls! Further, it is clear that men must be fast held by the bondage of their sins when we recollect that, according to the confession of the most of them, the pleasures of sin are by no means great. I have heard them say themselves that they have been satiated after a short season of indulgence We know how true the word is, "Who hath woe? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." No form of sin has ever been discovered yet that has yielded satisfaction. You shall look at those who have had all that heart could wish, and have without restraint indulged their passions, and you shall find them to be in their latter end amongst the most wretched rather than the most satisfied of mankind. Yet for these pleasures--I think I degrade the word when I call them pleasures--for these pleasures they are willing to pawn their souls and risk everlasting woe; and all this while, be it remembered, to add to the wonder, there are pleasures to be found in godliness; they do not deny this, they cannot without belying their own observation. We who are at least as honest as they are, bear our testimony that we never knew what true happiness was till we gave our hearts to Christ; but since then our peace has been like a river. We have had our afflictions, we have suffered grievous bodily pain, we have endured mental depression, we have been heavily burdened, we have borne many trials; but we can say--

"We would not change our blest estate
For all the world calls good or great."

"Happy are the people whose God is the Lord!" We can set our seal to

this experimentally. See ye then, my brethren, these poor souls will prefer the pleasures that mock them to the pleasures that alone can satisfy. If we had to die like dogs, it would be worth while to be a Christian. If there were no hereafter, and our only consideration were who should enjoy this life the best, it would be the wisest thing to be a servant of God and a soldier of the cross. I say not it would ensure our being rich, I say not it would ensure our being respected, I say not it would ensure our walking smoothly and free from outward trouble; but I do say that because of "the secret something which sweetens all," because of the profound serenity which true religion brings, the Christian life out-masters every other, and there is none to be compared therewith. But think ye for awhile what the ungodly man's life is! I can only compare it to that famous diabolical invention of the Inquisition of ancient times. They had as a fatal punishment for heretics, what they called the "Virgin's Kiss." There stood in a long corridor the image of the Virgin. She outstretched her arms to receive her heretic child; she looked fair, and her dress was adorned with gold and tinsel, but as soon as the poor victim came into her arms the machinery within began to work, and the arms closed and pressed the wretch closer and closer to her bosom, which was set with knives, and daggers, and lancets, and razors, and everything that could cut and tear him, till he was ground to pieces in the horrible embrace; and such is the ungodly man's life. It standeth like a fair virgin, and with witching smile it seems to say, "Come to my bosom, no place so warm and blissful as this;" and then anon it begins to fold its arms of habit about the sinner, and he sins again and again, brings misery into his body, perhaps, if he fall into some form of sin, stings his soul, makes his thoughts a case of knives to torture him, and grinds him to powder beneath the force of his own iniquities. Men perceive this, and

dare not deny it; and yet into this virgin's bosom they still thrust themselves, and reap the deep damnation that iniquity must everywhere involve. Alas, alas, my God!

And now, once more, this terrible mystery, which is only solved by men's being held by their sins, has this added to it, that all the while in the case of most of you now present, all that I have said is believed, and a great deal of it is felt. I mean this: if I were talking with persons who did not believe they had a soul, or believe in the judgment to come, or believe in the penalty of sin, or believe in the reward of righteousness, I should see some reason why they rejected the great salvation; but the most of you who attend this house of prayer--I think I might say all--have scarcely ever had a doubt about these things. You would be very much horrified if any one would insinuate that you did not believe the Bible to be the word of God. You have a little Pharisaism in your soul, that you think you are not as scoffers are, nor infidels. I own you are not, but I grieve to say I think you are more inconsistent than they. If these things be a fiction, well, sirs, your course is rational; but if these things be realities, what shall I say for you when I plead with God on your behalf? What excuse can I make for you? If you profess to believe these things, act as though you believe them; if you do not, practically act so. Why do you profess to own them as the truth? The case is worse, for you not only believe these thing's to be true, but some of you have felt their power. You have gone home from this place, and you could not help it, you have sought your chamber and bowed your knee in prayer; such prayer as it was, for, alas! your goodness has been like the morning cloud and the early dew. I know some of you who have had to break off some of your sins, for your conscience would not let you rest in them. Yet you are unbelievers still, still you are undecided, still

you are unsaved, and at this moment, if your soul were required of you, nothing would be in prospect but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. O my hearer, you whose conscience has been at times awakened, in whom the arrows of the great King have found a lodging place, in whom they are rankling still, yield, I pray thee, yield to the divine thrusts, and give up thy contrite spirit to thy Redeemer's hands. But if thou do not, what shall I say to thee? The kingdom of God has been thrust from you by yourselves. Be sure of this, it has come near you, and in coming near it has involved solemn responsibilities which I pray you may not have to feel the weight of in the world to come.

Here, then, stands the riddle, that man is so set against God and his Christ that he never will accept eternal salvation until the Holy Spirit, by a supernatural work, overcomes his will and turns the current of his affections; and why is this? The answer lies in the text, because his own iniquities have taken him, and he is holden with the cords of his sin. For this reason he will not come unto Christ that he may have life; for this reason he cannot come, except the Father which hath sent Christ draw him.

II. But now, secondly, I pass on to observe that though this is the solution of one mystery, IT IS IN ITSELF A GREATER MYSTERY. It is a terrible mystery that man should be so great a fool, so mad a creature as to be held by cords apparently so feeble as the cords of his own sins. To be bound by reason is honorable; to be hold by compulsion, if you cannot resist it, is at least not discreditable; but to be held simply by sin, by sin and nothing else, is a bondage which is disgraceful to the human name. It lowers man to the last degree, to think that be should want no fetter to hold him but the fetter of his own evil lusts and desires. Let us just think of one or two cords, and

you will see this.

One reason why men receive not Christ and are not saved, is because they are hampered by the sin of forgetting God. Think of that for a minute. Men forget God altogether. The commission of many a sin has been prevented by the presence of a child. In the presence of a fellow creature, ordinarily a man will feel himself under some degree of restraint. Yet that eye which never sleeps, the eye of the eternal God, exercises no restraint on the most of men. If there were a child in that chamber thou wouldst respect it-but God being there thou canst sin with impunity. If thy mother or thy father were there thou wouldst not dare offend, but God who made thee and whose will can crush thee, thy lawful sovereign, thou takest no more account of him than though he were a dog, yea, not so much as that. Oh, strange thing that men should thus act! And yet with many it is not because of the difficulty of thinking of God. Men of study, for instance, if they are considering the works of God, must be led up to thoughts of God. Galen was converted from being an atheist while in the process of dissecting the human body; he could not but see the finger of God in the nerves and sinews, and all the rest of the wonderful embroidery of the human frame. There is not an emmet or an infusorial animalcule beneath the microscope but what as plainly as tongue can speak, saith, "Mortal, think of God who made thee and me." Some men travel daily over scenes that naturally suggest the Creator; they go down to the sea in ships, and do business on great waters, where they must see the works of the Lord, and yet they even manage to become the most boisterous blasphemers against the sacred majesty of the Most High, in his very temple where everything speaks of his glory. But you will tell me perhaps, some of you, that you are not engaged in such pursuits. I reply, I know it. Many of you have to labor with your hands for your

daily bread, in occupations requiring but little mental exercise. So much the more guilty then are you that when your mind is not necessarily taken up with other things, you still divert it from all thoughts of God. The working man often find is it very possible to spend his leisure hours in politics, and to amuse his working hours by meditating upon schemes more or less rational concerning the government of his country, and will he dare to tell me therefore that he could not during that time think of God? There is an aversion to God in your heart, my brother, or else it would not be that from Monday morning to Saturday night you forget him altogether. Even when sitting here you find it by no means a pleasant thing to be reminded of your God, and yet if I brought up the recollection of your mother, perhaps in heaven, the topic would not be displeasing to you. What owe you to your mother compared with what you owe to your God? If I spoke to you of some dear friend who has assisted you in times of distress, you would be pleased that I had touched upon such a chord; and may I not talk with you concerning your God, and ask you why do you forget him? Have you good thoughts for all but the best? Have you kind thoughts of gratitude for every friend but the best friend that man can have? My God! my God! why do men treat thee thus? Brightest, fairest, best, kindest, and most tender, and yet forgotten by the objects of thy care!

If men were far away from God, and it were a topic abstruse and altogether beyond reach, something might be said. But imagine a fish that despised the ocean and yet lived in it, a man who should be unconscious of the air he breathes! "In him we live and move and have our being; we are also his offspring." He sends the frost, and he will send the spring; he sends the seed-time and the harvest, and every shower that drops with plenty comes from him, and every wind that blows with health speeds forth from his mouth. Wherefore then is he to be

forgotten when everything reminds you of him? This is a sin, a cruel sin, a cursed sin, a sin indeed that binds men hard and fast, that they will not come to Christ that they may have life; but it is strange, it is beyond all miracles a miracle, that such a folly as this should hold men from coming to Christ.

Another sin binds all unregenerate hearts; it is the sin of not loving the Christ of God. I am not about to charge any person here with such sins as adultery, or theft, or blasphemy, but I will venture to say that this is a sin masterly and gigantic, which towers as high as any other--the sin of not loving the Christ of God. Think a minute. Here is one who came into the world out of pure love, for no motive but mercy, with nothing to gain, but though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; why then is he not loved? The other day there rode through these streets a true hero, a brave bold man who set his country free, and I do remember how I heard your shouts in yonder street, and you thronged to look into the lion-like face of Italy's liberator. I blame you not, I longed to do the same myself, he well deserved your shouts and your loudest praises. But what had he done compared with what the Christ of God has done in actually laying down his life to redeem men from bondage, yielding up himself to the accursed death of the cross that man might be saved through him? Where are your acclamations, sirs, for this greater Hero? Where are the laurels that you cast at his feet? Is it nothing to you, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, is it nothing to you that Jesus should die? Such a character, so inexpressibly lovely, and yet despised! Such a salvation, so inexpressibly precious, and yet rejected! Oh, mystery of iniquity! indeed, the depths of sin are almost as fathomless as the depths of God, and the transgressions of the wicked all but as infinite in infamy as God is infinite in love.

I might also speak of sins against the Holy Ghost that men commit, in that they live and even die without reverential thoughts of him or care about him; but I shall speak of one sin, and that is the mystery that men should be held by the sin of neglecting their souls. You meet with a person who neglects his body, you call him fool, if, knowing that there is a disease, he will not seek a remedy. If, suffering, from some fatal malady, he never attempts to find a cure, you think the man is fit only for a lunatic asylum. But a person who neglects his soul, be is but one of so numerous a class, that we overlook the madness. Your body will soon die, it is but as it were the garment of yourself and will be worn out; but you yourself are better than your body as a man is better than the dress he wears. Why spend you then all thoughts about this present life and give none to the life to come?

It has long been a mystery who was the man in the iron mask. We believe that the mystery was solved some years ago, by the conjecture that he was the twin brother of Louis XIV., King of France, who, fearful lest he might have his throne disturbed by his twin brother, whose features were extremely like his own, encased his face in a mask of iron and shut him up in the Bastille for life. Your body and your soul are twin brothers. Your body, as though it were jealous of your soul, encases it as in an iron mask of spiritual ignorance, lest its true lineaments, its immortal lineage should be discovered, and shuts it up within the Bastille of sin, lest getting liberty and discovering its royalty, it should win the mastery over the baser nature. But what a wretch was that Louis XIV., to do such a thing to his own brother! How brutal, how worse than the beasts that perish! But, sir, what art thou if thou doest thus to thine own soul, merely that thy body may be satisfied, and thy earthly nature may have a present gratification? O sirs, be not so unkind, so cruel to yourselves. But yet this sin of living for the

mouth and living for the eye, this sin of living for what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed, this sin of living by the clock within the narrow limits of the time that ticks by the pendulum, this sin of living as if this earth were all and there were nought beyond--this is the sin that holds this City of London, and holds the world, and binds it like a martyr to the stake to perish, unless it be set free.

Generally, however, there also lies some distinct form of actual sin at the bottom of most men's impenitence. I will not attempt to make a guess, my dear hearer, as to what it may be that keeps thee from Christ, but without difficulty I could, I think, state what these sins generally are. Some men would fain be saved, but they would not like to tale up the cross and be despised as Christians. Some would fain follow Christ, but they will not give up their self-righteous pride; they want to have a part of the glory of salvation. Some men have a temper, which they do not intend to try to restrain. Others have a secret sin, too sweet for them to give it up; it is like a right arm, and they cannot come to the cutting of it off. Some enjoy company which is attractive, but destructive, and from that company they cannot fly. Men one way or another are held fast like birds with birdlime, till the fowler comes and takes them to their destruction. O that they were wise, for then they might be awakened out of this folly! But this still remaineth the mystery of mysteries, that those sins absurd and deadly, bind men as with cords, and hold them fast like a bull in a net.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER IS THIS, a message sinner to thee, and saint, to thee.

Sinner, to thee. Thou art held fast by thy sins, and I fear me much thou wilt be held so till thou perish, perish everlastingly. Man, does not this concern you? I lay last night by the hour together on my bed

awake, tossing with a burden on my heart, and I tell thee that only burden that I had was thy soul. I cannot endure it, man, that thou shouldst be cast into the "lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." I believe that book as thou dost; believing it, I am alarmed at the prospect which awaits the unconverted. The more I look into the subject of the world to come, the more I am impressed that all those who would lessen our ideas of the judgment that God will bring upon the wicked, are waging war against God and against virtue and the best interests of men. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Do not try it, my friend, I pray thee do not try it. Run not this risk, this certainty of endless misery, I beseech thee, dare it not! What sayest thou, "What then should I do?" I venture to reply in the words of one of old, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, for it is time to seek the Lord." But thou repliest, "How can I break them off? they are like cords and bonds." Ah, soul, here is another part of thy misery, that thou hast destroyed thyself, but thou canst not save thyself; thou hast woven the net, thou hast made it fast and firm, but thou canst not tear it in pieces. Bat there is One who can, there is One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord descended that he might loose the prisoner. There is a heart that feels for thee in heaven, and there is One mighty to save, who can rescue thee. Breathe that prayer, "O set me free, thou Liberator of captive souls;" breathe the prayer now, and believe that he can deliver thee, and thou shalt yet, captive as thou art, go free, and this shall be thy ransom price, his precious blood; and this shall be the privilege of thy ransomed life, to love and praise him who hath redeemed thee from going down into the pit.

But I said the conclusion of the whole matter had something to do with the child of God. It has this to do with him. Dear brother and sister in Christ, by the love you bear to your fellow sinners, never help to

make the bonds of their sins stronger than they are--you will do so if you are inconsistent. They will say, "Why, such a one professes to be a saved man, and yet see how he lives!" Will you make excuses for sinners? It was said of Judah, by the prophet, that she had become a comfort to Sodom and Gomorrah. O never do this; never let the ungodly have to say, "There is nothing in it; it is all a lie; it is all a mere pretense; we may as well continue in sin, for see how these Christians act!" No, brethren, they have bonds enough without your tightening them or adding to them.

In the next place, never cease to warn sinners. Do not stand by and see them die without lifting up a warning note. A house on fire, and you see it as you go to your morning's labor, and yet never lift up the cry of "Fire!" a man perishing, and yet no tears for him! Can it be so? At the foot of Mr. Richard Knill's likeness I notice these words, "Brethren, the heathen are perishing, will you let them perish?" I would like to have each of you apply to your own conscience the question, "Sinners are perishing, will you let them perish without giving them at least, a warning of what the result of sin must be?" My brethren, I earnestly entreat you who know the gospel to tell it out to others. It is God's way of cutting the bonds which confine men's souls; be instant, in season and out of season, in publishing the good news of liberty to the captives through the redeeming Christ.

And lastly, as you and I cannot set these captives free, let us look to him who can. O let our prayers go up and let our tears drop down for sinners. Let it come to an agony, for I am persuaded we shall never get much from God by way of conversion till we feel we must have it, until our soul breaketh for the longing that it hath for the salvation of souls: when your cry is like that of Rachel, "Give me children or I die I" you shall not long be spiritually barren. When you must have

converts, or your heart will break, God will hear you and send you an answer. The Lord bless you! May none of you be held by the cords of your sins, but may ye be bound with cords to the horns of God's altar as a happy and willing sacrifice to him that loved you. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON--Proverbs 3.

Chapter 8

A Generous Proposal

(No. 916)

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Come you with us, and we will do you good." Numbers 10:29.

THESE ancient words, so simple, yet so sweet, fascinate us with a potent hallowed charm. They ring out their melody like a familiar air. The language of a heart full of kindness, inspired with faith, and inspirited with the enthusiasm of a hope so much Divine that the lapse of ages impairs not their force, or diminishes anything from their natural spontaneous freshness. This story of Hobab one can hardly read without remembering the Apostolic declaration that the Law was a "shadow of good things to come." A truly instructive shadow it was. In this instance the shadow is so like the image, the type so like the antitype, that we can almost see the Christian Church, and the convert as he is invited to unite with it. And we may behold in metaphor the blessings of which he may expect to be a partaker in so doing.

"Come you with us, and we will do you good," seems to be quite as suitable an address from the lips of a Christian pastor as from those of the Prophet of Horeb, who was king in Jeshurun. We do not feel in the least degree hesitant as if we were wrenching the words from their natural association, or even exercising the slightest ingenuity in accommodating them to our own circumstances, so suitable do they seem for our use. The people of Israel in the wilderness were a type of the Church of Christ. The invitation here given was such as may be given to those who are proper subjects for communion with the Christian Church. We shall proceed accordingly, this evening, to talk to you upon four

things. First, the nature of a true Church as it is depicted by Israel in the wilderness. Secondly, the obligation of such a Church to invite suitable persons to join it. Thirdly, the argument that the Church may use, and the inducements it will always have to offer in setting forth the benefits to be conferred on those who heartily respond. And fourthly, the scrupulous fidelity it behooves us, as members of the Church, to observe in keeping our pledge ever afterwards to seek the welfare of such as unite with our fellowship.

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHURCH AS IT IS PICTURED BY ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS? We might prolong the answer to this question with many minute features, but it will be unnecessary, at present, to do more than give you a simple broad outline. The people in the wilderness were a redeemed people. They had been redeemed by blood and redeemed by power. The sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb over their lintels and their doorposts had secured their safety when the first-born of Egypt was slain.

Thus they were redeemed by blood, while wonderful miracles were worked throughout the whole land. And at the last, when threatened and pursued by their oppressors, the whole of the pride and pomp of Egypt was destroyed in the Red Sea. They were, indeed, redeemed by power. So, all the true members of God's Church understand what the blood of sprinkling means. They have enjoyed a Passover through it. God has passed over them--passed over them in mercy. Justice has executed its warrant upon the Person of the Lamb, and they have escaped--they have been redeemed by blood.

And the Holy Spirit has entered into their hearts and made them hate their former sins. He has delivered them from the dominant power of their inward corruptions, has set them free and brought them out of the bondage of sin. Thus they have also been redeemed by power, and no one

has any right to think himself a member of Christ's Church unless by faith he has seen himself redeemed by blood--and in his experience has also been redeemed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But, according to our text and the context, the Israelites were a people who were passing through a land where they found no rest, neither did they desire any, for they were journeying to another country, the promised land, the Canaan. Now, here is another description of the true Church of God. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. This is not their rest. Here they have no continuing city. Objects which may suit men who have no outlook beyond death would not be suitable to them. That which rejoices the heart of the mere worldling gives them but very slender solace.

Their hope and their consolation lie beyond the river. They look for a city that has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God.

Judge then, my dear Hearer, whether you are a member of God's Church, of the Church of Jesus Christ. If you are, you are a stranger and a foreigner this night here below, however pleasant the tent of your pilgrimage may be. Your Father's house on High is your destination. You are an exile from your home, albeit to your faith's foreseeing eye its golden gates may never so clearly appear. You have not yet come to your rest, but there remains to you a rest, a rest to which you shall come in due time, though you have not yet reached it. May I entreat you to put these questions to your own hearts as they arise, and judge yourselves.

Israel in the wilderness, according to the text, again, was a people walking by faith as to the future. Remember, the words are, "They were going to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you." They had never seen it--no one had come from it to tell them of it. True, in after days some spies had returned--but they brought up an ill report

of the land, so that the people required even more faith, then, than they did before. If anyone had said to them, "But, if there is a land that flows with milk and honey, how will you gain it? The inhabitants thereof are strong and mighty--how are you sure that you will ever obtain this goodly land?" the only reply would have been, "The Lord has spoken to us concerning it."

Every true Israelite had been instructed as to the Covenant God had made with Abraham when He said, "To you and to your seed will I give this land to possess it," and every true Israelite was expecting that His people should find a lodgment and a portion in that land evermore because of the Covenant which God had made with his fathers. They were walking, then, in that respect, by faith--looking for a country which they had not seen--traversing a desert in search of a land which as yet they had not known. And with only God's Word for their title deed and nothing more.

And such are God's people now. As for joys to come, they have not tasted them--but they are looking for them because God has promised them. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit," and the Spirit reveals them only to our faith. If you ask me, "How do you know that there is a Heaven?" I must answer you, I believe it on God's testimony. I have no other warrant for it. No man has returned from that fair land to testify that he has heard the everlasting song, or seen the blessed citizens as they stand in their bright array before the Everlasting Throne.

Nor want I that any such should return. God's Word is enough. Let that stand instead of the testimony of ten thousand angels, or of myriads of the white-robed host of spirits who might have returned to tell the

tale. We walk by faith as Israel did of old. Are you walking by such a faith? Do you believe in the unseen future, and does the hope of an unseen reward make you despise the present rewards of sin? Are you willing to bear the reproach of Christ because you count it greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt? Are you willing, now, to take up with Christ's Cross because you believe in Christ's crown? Though you have not seen it, do you believe in it, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?

These people, also, as to their present circumstances were walking by faith. It was not merely faith which sang to them of Canaan, but it was faith that told them of the manna which fell day by day, and the water which flowed from the rock--which stream followed them in their journey. Why, they could not live in any other way in the wilderness but by faith in God, for from that arid strand there sprang nothing for their nourishment! Here and there a palm tree--now and then a cooling well. But for the most part, had it not been for the goodness of God, their way had been over a desert, cheerless, waste, and terrible. But He gladdened it for them, and made the place of His feet, and of their feet, too, right glorious, for His mercy and His loving kindness endure forever!

Now, in this world the Christian man has to live by faith upon God as to present things. As to temporal necessities he must cast all his care on Him who cares for us, but especially as to all spiritual supplies the Christian has no stock of Grace. He has no inner spring within himself in his old nature. He has to look for everything that can sustain his new life from God, even the Father, who has promised not to forsake him. Now surely, my dear Hearer, you know whether you are living by present faith or not. If all your comfort is derived from that which you can handle, and hear, and see. And if your joys of life

are only the outward things of the present--then you are no member of the Church of God.

Whether you may have been baptized, or confirmed--whatever profession you may have made, or whatever sign you may have received--you do not belong to Christ's people--nor can you belong to them. But if you live by faith, I care not of what Church you are a member. If you are exhibiting day by day a living faith upon a living but unseen God. If your trust is in His Providence. If you daily resort to Christ for help and succor. If you have that faith which is the mark of God's elect, you may depend upon it that you are one of His.

One other mark let us give among many more which might be mentioned. These people found, wherever they went, that they were surrounded by foes. In the wilderness the Amalekites were against them. When they crossed into the promised land all the inhabitants of Canaan were up in arms against them. So I think you will find it if you are a child of God. All places are full of snares. Events, prosperous or adverse, expose you to temptations. All things that happen to you, though God makes them work for good, in themselves would work for evil. Here on this earth the world is no friend to Divine Grace to help you on to God.

The bias of the current is not towards Heaven. Alas, it is the other way! "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." "The whole world lies in the Wicked One, and you are of God, little children." Darkness prevails. It cannot minister to your safety or to your happiness. Neither can the sinful world minister light to the understanding, peace to the conscience, joy to the heart, or holiness to the life of the Believer. You will have to fight continually. The last step you take will be a conflict, and you will never be able to sheathe your sword until you are in the bosom of Christ. Thus must you

maintain the godly warfare--

"'Till with yonder blood-bought crowd You shall sing on Canaan's shore
Songs oft triumph, sweet and loud War with Amalek no more."

Here, then, are some of the marks of the Church of Christ. I hope that a part of that Church worships in this House of Prayer. A part of that Church will be found to worship in every House of Prayer where the disciples of our common Lord assemble, and the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ is acknowledged.

II. Let us pass on to the second word, which is this, that IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO INVITE SUITABLE PERSONS TO JOIN WITH IT. As you read--"Come you with us, and we will do you good"--are not these the terms in which any Church should invite a suitable pastor to unite with it? I have always felt that they have a better application to a pastor than they have to the people. For it is said of Hobab, "You know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you shall be unto us instead of eyes."

It was inviting a really efficient helper, who would be of great service to the Israelites, to come and cast in his lot with them. So should a Church expect to find in its pastor one who may guide them, because he knows how they are to encamp in the wilderness. One who may be to them, in some respects, instead of eyes. Their invitation should come in this way, not only, "Come you with us, that we may get good out of you"--that is one design--but it should also be, "Come you with us, that we may do you good. That we may hold up your hands, that we may sustain you by our prayers, that we may back you up by our efforts. That being led onward by you from one work of Christian activity to another, we may never fail you, never betray you, but may stand with you even to the last."

I believe you will seldom get much good unless you are willing also to

confer good. Those who are the nearest to the heart of the preacher, in all Christian service, will in all probability be most spiritually enriched under his ministry. I speak not of myself nor for myself, but I specially address myself now to those of you, my Hearers, who are members of other Churches. Do, I exhort you, love your ministers! Stand up for their character in all companies! Rally at their side in all their efforts--never let them have to regret your absence at the weeknight service, or at any other time, if you can help it.

Let them see that you appreciate the men whom you have chosen to be over you in the Lord, and that you have said in inviting them to come among you, "Come you with us, and we will do you good." Not to linger on that view, however pertinent and seasonable, let us take the words as significant of the manner in which Churches should invite suitable persons to come among them as private members. Are there not those who go in and out merely as visitors worshipping with you, who have never joined hands with you in Covenant?

They meet with you as mere hearers, under the same ministry, but they have not identified themselves with the brotherhood to sit down and feast with you at the Table of the Lord. To such as these the proposal may be made, and the welcome proffered. The conditions, of course, need to be thoroughly understood on our part as well as on theirs. We dare not invite anyone to join the visible Church who has not first joined the invisible Church. We do not believe that a man has any right to be baptized in water unless he has first been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Nor that anyone has a right to eat of the Lord's Supper, the outward signs of bread and wine, until he has eaten of the flesh and drank of the blood of the Son of Man, in a spiritual sense.

He must have the essence of the symbol before we dare give the symbol.

So a man must be vitally united to the living Church of Christ before he has any right to be professionally united there. Therefore it would be a sin on the part of any child of God to say to anyone whom he knew to be an unconverted person, "Come and unite yourself with the Church." No, that cannot be. First, dear Hearer, you must be one with Christ, reconciled to God, a Believer in the precious blood--and then afterwards you may come to the Church of God. But until then you have no part nor lot in this matter, for you are still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

Moses did not thus invite any strangers or neighbors indiscriminately, saying, "Come you with us," but he invited Hobab as one whom he well knew, and of whose fitness he could no doubt feel. Was not Raguel his father, the priest of Midian, a servant of the Most High God? And was not Hobab also a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of Israel? "Come you with us," says he, "you are our kith and kin. Birds of a feather flock together. Come you with us and we will do you good. You are one of our Brethren, come and welcome, nothing shall stand in the way. Come you with us, and we will do you good."

Now, I have heard persons speak on this wise, "I believe that my child has been converted, but you must not think that I have pressed him, for I never spoke to my child about religion." I am heartily ashamed of a father who can say that! And I hope that he will be equally ashamed of himself. I quite agree, however, that no parent and no friend should press another to make a public profession of faith until he is as assured as he possibly can be that the fruits of the Spirit are put forth in that child, or that friend. But, once assured of that, there can be no credit in holding your tongue about a Christian duty. It is the duty of every child of God to be associated with the Christian Church, and surely it is part of our duty to instruct others to do what

the Lord would approve of! Do not, therefore, hesitate to say to such as serve and fear the Lord, "How is it that you remain outside the pale of the visible Church? Come you with us, and we will do you good." So Moses did to Hobab.

As it is a very kind and tender word, "Come you with us," let it be spoken persuasively. Use such reasoning as you can to prove that it is at once their duty and their privilege. Observe, Moses does not command, but he persuades. Nor does he merely make a suggestion or give a formal invitation, but he uses an argument. He puts it attractively, "And we will do you good." So, look the matter up--study it--get your arguments ready. Seek out inducements from your own experience. Draw a reason, and there and then try to persuade your Christian friends.

Do it heartily. Observe how Moses puts it as from a very warm heart. "Come you with us. Give me your hand, my Brother. Come you with us, and we will do you good." There are no "ifs," "ands," or "buts." It is not, "Well, you may perhaps be welcome," but "Come you with us." Give a hearty, loving, warm invitation to those whom you believe to be your Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Do it repeatedly if once will not suffice. Observe in this case, Hobab said he thought he would depart to his own land and his kindred. But Moses returned to the charge, and says, "Leave us not, I pray you." How earnestly he puts it! He will have no put off. If at first it was a request, now it is a beseeching almost to entreaty--"Leave us not, I pray you." And how he repeats the old argument, but puts it in a better light--"If you go with us, yes, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto you."

I would, therefore, earnestly say to Christian Brothers and Sisters here, look for some among our congregation, such as you believe to be godly people, and put to them this matter. I am sure they are losing

much benefit, and quite certain that they are standing in an irregular position. If it is right for any one Christian not to be a member of a Church it is right for all Christians not to be members of Churches--consequently it would be right for there to be no visible Church, and ordinances might be dispensed with--for all these things must either exist through the maintenance of sacred order or else collapse with the breach of godly discipline.

What is not the duty of one is not the duty of any--and what is the duty of one is the duty of all--for we all stand alike before God. If I may be innocent in abstaining from union with the people of God, so may all of you. Or if you may, so may I. There is no more obligation upon me to preach the Gospel than there is upon any one of you to make a profession of his faith. If you are a Christian, the same rule of love that prompts me to speak for my Lord should prompt you in your way to speak for your Lord. And if I should not be excusable if I remained silent, and refused to bear my testimony, neither will you be excusable, being a Christian, if you refuse to unite yourself with the people of God.

Remember our Master's word, "Whoever therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men," (which has the force there of not confessing), "him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven."

Before I leave this point let me call your attention to a certain sense in which Christian men may address this invitation to all that they meet with. "Come you with us, and we will do you good." Not, "come and join our Church," not, "come and be members," not, "come and put on a profession of faith." You cannot say that to any but to those in whom you see the fruits of the Spirit. But you may say, and you ought to

say, to ALL persons of all classes on all sides, "Come away from the seed of evildoers. Cast in your lot with the people of God. Leave the world, come on pilgrimage to the better country. Forsake the pursuit of vanities--lay hold on eternal life. Waste not all your thoughts upon the bootless cares of time--think about the momentous matters of eternity.

"Why will you be companions of those who are upon the wrong side, and whose cause is the cause of evil? Why will you remain an enemy to God? Why will you be in an unreconciled state? We, by God's Grace, have cast in our lot with Christ and with His cause. We desire to live to His glory. Our ambition is to serve Him. If we could, we would live without sin, for we hate it and loathe it. If we could, we would be as the angels are, without a single fault. Come and cast in your lot with us--that is, believe. That is, trust a Savior slain. That is, put your soul into the custody of Christ the Intercessor. That is, press forward through a life of holiness on earth to a home of happiness in Heaven."

"Come you with us, and we will do you good."

So, then, the exhortation of our text which, strictly speaking, seems most applicable to the minister, becomes next suitable to the child of God who has not up to now cast in his lot with the company of our Lord's disciples. And after that, in a certain sense, it may be appropriately addressed to all who come under the sound of the Gospel.

"Come you with us, and we will do you good."

III. But now, our third observation is that THE MAIN ARGUMENT--THE MOST POWERFUL INCENTIVE WE CAN EVER USE IS THAT ASSOCIATION WITH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL DO THOSE WHO ENTER

INTO IT GOOD.

I am sure it will, for I speak from experience. And if I were to call upon many scores, and even hundreds, in this House of Prayer, they

would all bear the same testimony--that union with the people of God has done them good. The Church of God may say this, first, because she can offer to those who join with her good company. In the Church of God are those who are called "the excellent of the earth," in Whom David said was all his delight. In the Church of God are the humble, meek, and lowly.

And, though in that Church there will come a traitorous Judas, yet there are not wanting the warm-spirited and loving John, the bold and daring Peter, the practical James, the well-instructed Paul in labors more abundant, and many of the precious sons of Zion and daughters of Jerusalem in like manner. Of whom, I might affirm, as the Apostle did of Priscilla and Aquila, they are my helpers in Christ Jesus, unto whom I not only give thanks, but also all the Churches of the Gentiles.

Truly we can sing with heart-felt sincerity, Dr. Watts' paraphrase of David's Psalm --

"Here my best friends, my kindred dwell, Here God my Savior reigns."

Good company is ever a good thing, and the children of God may say to their Brethren who have not yet joined with them, "Come you with us, and we will do you good," for we will introduce you to the goodly fellowship of the saints. Come join a section of the general assembly and Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven, and whose work of faith, patience of hope, and labors of love are spread abroad throughout the world.

"Come with us," the Church of God may say, "and you shall have good instruction," for it is in the true Church of God that the doctrines of Grace are preached, that the Covenant of Grace is unfolded, that the Person of Christ is extolled, that the work of the Spirit is magnified.

All the precious things, indeed, which make up the spiritual meat of God's servants are brought forth and put upon the table every Sunday.

There the good stewards bring forth things both new and old. In the midst of the Church the Good Shepherd makes us to lie down in the green pastures, and leads us be-
side the still waters. Come you with us, and the teaching of the Church shall do you good--you shall hear those glorious doctrines which shall build you up in your most holy faith.

"Come you with us, and we will do you good," in the best sense, for you shall feel in our midst the good Presence of God. Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is He in the midst of them. And in the greater assemblies of His people, when the solemn hymn swells up to Heaven and the fervent prayer rises like a cloud of sweet perfume, and the ministry of the Gospel is diffused like a sweet smelling savor of Christ unto God--there is God. There the Father is, receiving returning prodigals, accepting His dear children who feel the spirit of adoption.

There the Son is, manifesting Himself unto them as He does not unto the world. There the Spirit is, working in them to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and helping their infirmities as a Comforter and an Advocate. Have you not often felt the Presence of God, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in your assemblies as the people of God? Can you not, therefore, say with the recollections in your glowing hearts of the consolations you have received in association with each other, "Come you with us, and we will do you good"?

"Come with us again, for you shall participate in all the good offices of the Church." That is to say, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, if you will cast in your lot with us, if there is prayer, you shall have your share in it. We will pray for you in your trouble, and trial, and anguish. If a Brother's voice can intercede for you when your tongue is dumb with grief, you shall certainly have such help as they that can

minister to you. Come you with us, for in the true Church of God there is sympathy. Genuine Believers are taught to "weep with those that weep," and to "rejoice with those that rejoice." They feel that they are members, one of another, and partakers of the same life with Jesus Christ.

If there is anything to be found in ordinances you shall have a share of that good thing. If the Lord reveals Himself in the breaking of bread, you shall not be shut out from the Table. Come you with us, and when we behold Him you shall see Him, too. Come you with us, and if our fellowship is with Christ, you shall have a share in it. And if our conversation of the things of God is sweet and pleasant, you, too, shall have your say and your good word, and we will rejoice to hear you. We invite you to a pure brotherly fellowship, not to one of name only, but in deed and in heart. "Come you with us, and we will do you good."

But the good that Hobab was to get was not only on the road. He must have got a deal of good on the road, for he saw in the sacrifice what he had never seen before. While he walked among those tents of Judah he must have felt that God was remarkably present there as he had never felt it among the tents of Midian. He saw there every morning the pillar of cloud, and every night the pillar of fire. He heard the sound of the silver trumpets. He saw the uplifting of the sacred banners, and the marching of the chosen host of God, and he must have felt, "This is a place more marvelous than any I have ever trod before in that falling manna, in that miraculous stream. I see everywhere the marks of Omnipotence, love, and wisdom as I never have seen them in all my solitary musings or my long wanderings aforetime."

So, in the Church of God there are the footprints of Deity, there are marks of the sublime Presence of the Christ of God who abides in the

furnace with His afflicted people. Signs of God's Presence such as all the world besides cannot exhibit. You shall get good on the road. But still, the main good that Hobab got was this--he went into the promised land with God's people. We read of his people, the Kenites dwelling in the land in aftertime. He seems to have become a partaker of the same Covenant with Israel, to have become part and parcel with them. So, the main blessing that you get from being united with the invisible Church of Christ through being part and parcel of the Body of Christ is reserved for the hereafter--

"When God makes up His last account
Of natives in the Holy Mount;
'Twill be an honor to appear
As one new born and nourished there." Woe unto those who shall have no part with Israel in the day when the lots shall be divided and the portions shall be given! Woe unto such as shall be found among the Amalekites or Canaanites--strangers to the chosen seed! But happy shall all they be who have God to be their God, for their portion shall be bliss forever. Come you, therefore, with us, for whatever good the Lord shall do unto us you shall be a partaker in it.

IV. And now, lastly. All this being seriously pondered and clearly understood, the last point is a matter of very serious importance. Lest we should be found mere pretenders, LET ALL OF US WHO BELONG TO CHRIST'S CHURCH

TAKE CARE TO MAKE THIS ARGUMENT TRUE.

I speak to many Brothers and Sisters here who have long been joined to the visible Church of God, and I put these questions to them--How have you carried out this silent compact which has been made with the friends of Christ? You have promised to do them good--have you fulfilled your pledges? I am afraid few of us have done good to our

fellow Christians up to the measure that we might have done, or that we ought to have done. Some professors, I fear, have forgotten the compact altogether. They joined the Church, but the idea of doing good to the rest of the community has scarcely entered into their mind.

"Come you with us, and we will do you good." You say this, then, to the poor members of the Church. Has God prospered you? Do them good. Say not to them, "Be you warmed and be you filled," but as far as ever your ability can reach, minister to them that Christ may not have to say to you, "I was an hungered and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink." Let your charity be wide as the world, for God makes it to rain on the just and the unjust--but remember--He has a peculiar people, and He would have us to be a peculiar people unto Himself. Let us do good unto all men, but specially to those who are of the household of faith. If you know a Brother in Christ whose need is pressing, own him as a Brother--open your hands wide unto him--do him good in this respect.

You that are old members of the Church, well established and instructed, you have virtually promised to do good to the young members--will you not try to do so? Some of them, perhaps, are not all you would like them to be. Mind you, you are not to condemn, but to reform them. Can you not gently prune the luxuriance of their branches that are a little too wild? Would it not be possible for you, in a loving and an affectionate manner, to assist them in the points in which they are weak? To lead them in the matters in which they err? Do them good--do not clamor against them with reproach, censure, sneer, and jibe. Nor wish to bind them down to conformity with your rules, judging them by the som-berness of your own disposition.

What if they are lively and cheerful--try to make them merry and wise. Let them be happy and rejoice--seek that their happiness may be in

Christ, and their rejoicing in the Lord. Do them good. There are some of your fellow Christians who are faint-hearted--not pleasant people to talk to. They will never cheer you much. They always look on the black side. They have always some trouble. They are terribly dull company--do not shun them, do them good. Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of feeble heart, "Be strong. Fear not." Do not forsake them, but you that are spiritual bear their burdens, and help to make them rejoice.

Some among your number will be backsliders--alas, that it should be so. Let not your coldness ever accelerate the pace at which they step aside--rather let your persevering care watch over them, that their first wandering may be soon checked. Little, alas, can be done to remedy backsliding when it goes far, but much may be done by nipping it in the bud. In the Church of God, prevention is infinitely better than cure. Watch over them, then. "If any man be overtaken in a fault, you that are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, remembering yourself lest you also be tempted."

Some in the Church may be ignorant. There always were such. No standard of height is set up in the Word of God for all the recruits to be up to that level. No bylaw prescribes that none be received unless they are of a certain stature. If, therefore, some you meet with are very ignorant, do them good. Do not set about a report of any absurd remark that they may make, or any misapprehension they may have upon a point of Divinity. You were not always so wise as you are now--probably you are not so wise now as you think you are. But anyhow, I shall argue from the wisdom you possess your duty to impart. You have said, "Come you with us, and we will do you good." It is not doing any man good to smile at him, to find fault with him for not knowing. But it is doing him good to hide his shortcomings and help his progress.

Once again--there may be some in your midst who are in a good deal of trouble. Have they no friends to sympathize and console them? Alas, friends in this world are often too much like swallows that are gone as soon as the first frost appears. Let it not be so with you--if you never owned him your friend before--be his friend now. Come to his aid if you possibly can. Let him have your countenance. Do not pass him because his black coat has a rusty hue. Do not get out of his way because you are afraid that he is short of cash. As far as ever you can, let him see, now he is in his trouble, that you did not value him for what he had, but for himself, for his character, for his attachment to Christ.

If anybody has spoken ill of him, do not be ready to jot down as true the slander that every fool or villain may please to hold forth against a Christian man. Search for yourselves, and if you are obliged to believe it, yet say little about it. Carry it before God, as though it were your own sin, and sorrow over it. Talk to your Brother, if it is your lot to know

him well, and get him to leave the evil into which he has fallen, and lead him back again. But do not forsake him. Or if he is the victim of slander and scandal, be you among the first to defend him. I do hope that there will always be among us a spirit of true Christian brotherhood so that those who love Christ and have thrown in their lot with us may find that we really desire to do them good.

I have thus spoken more particularly because I know that the number of Christians among us who are not making a profession is unusually large just now. I had far rather it should be so than that it should be the reverse--than that many should be making a profession without knowing or feeling the private virtue and public faith it demands. Better that you were outside the visible Church all your lives, and be in Christ,

than make a profession and yet have no part nor lot with Him. All these outward things are nothing compared with the inward. "You must be born again." There must be a living faith in Christ, a real change of heart--an indwelling of the Spirit of God to attest the verity of your godliness. Where these are, the rest ought not to be neglected. These things ought you to have done, and not to have left the other undone, but still, even if they are left undone, it shall not amount to a total shipwreck. But if there is no faith, you may build the vessel as you will, and you may think that you have loaded her with precious treasures--but sink she must--because that alone which would have kept her afloat has been neglected.

God grant us to be one with Christ, and to be one with His people in time and in eternity. There now--there now-- there is Christ's Church. And if I saw that she were in the stocks, and all were hooting her--if she stood in the pillory, and all were pelting her--yet it would be my desire to throw in my lot with her! Whatever she endured I would endure, because the day comes when those who were not on the side of Christ and His Church would give their eyes if they had been!

Yes, would wish themselves that they had never been born to think that they did not take up with the reproached people, and did not side with the reproached Savior. O be with Christ in His sorrows, that you may be with Him in His joy! Be with Him in His reproach, that you may be with Him in His glory! Amen.

Chapter 9

Precious, Honorable, Beloved

(No. 917)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROTROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you." Isaiah 43:4.

THE first reference of this text is evidently to Israel. That nation was precious in God's sight. He had been pleased sovereignly to make an election of the seed of Abraham, that they should be His portion, and He should be their portion evermore. They were precious in His sight because of the Covenant which He had made with their great forefather, saying, "In blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed, and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

This word of promise elevated them to an eminent position before the Lord. They were precious in the Lord's sight because His honor was concerned in their history. If the Covenant promise could be broken, there would be an impeachment of the fidelity of the Most High--if by any means the chosen people could be crushed by their enemies, then the Omnipotence of their Patron and Defender would also be in question. It was an important point that they should be preserved, because in the fulfillment of His Covenant with them the name of God would be glorified, as the God of faithfulness and Truth.

They were therefore precious in His sight. Many of the vast purposes of the Divine Being were intertwisted with the being and well-being of the chosen people. To them He had committed the sacred oracles--among them

lived His holy Prophets, to them He revealed the Law--of them as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and out of them the first preachers of the Gospel were chosen. Scarcely any great event that glorifies the Grace of God can be dissociated from the Jewish people. Let me even remind you that the calling of the Gentiles is the consequence of the putting away of Israel for awhile because of unbelief, and that the future glory, whenever it shall come, will certainly be intimately connected with the restoration of the chosen people.

Very precious is Israel, because like a silver thread we see her story running through the whole line of God's Grace as manifested to the sons of men. The Israelites of old were precious to God because He had done so much for them. He had brought them out of Egypt "with a high hand and an outstretched arm." He had cast out the tribes of Canaan before them. He had oftentimes rebuked kings for their sakes, yes, and slain mighty kings that they might be delivered. The results of all this the Lord would not lose, and they, therefore for this cause also were precious in His sight.

Doubtless, one main reason of Israel's preciousness lay in the fact that out of Judah should arise the Royal Man, the Son of God, in Whom the Father is well-pleased. For the sake of that Divine Seed, which I may call the vital kernel of Israel's race, the Lord took pleasure in the descendants of Abraham, and they were precious in His sight.

Many other reasons might be given why God, having once elected the little nation of Israel by an act of distinguishing Grace, should look upon the people as peculiarly precious. But we pass on to observe that He next declares them to be honorable--honorable because, or from the time when they had been precious in His sight. Whoever God may elect for Himself, he is by that very fact rendered honorable, and the Jewish people in being set apart as the Lord's own people, were by that very

separation honored above all other nations on the face of the earth. They, moreover, received the Light while the whole world was in darkness. Although some stray gleams fell here and there among the nations, yet the brightest illumination which enlightened the early ages from the Throne of God came to the Israelite people. While others worshipped gods that were not gods, Israel adored Him whose Throne is in the heavens and whose kingdom rules over all. Theirs were the commands written with the Divine finger--theirs a sacredly instructive ritual--theirs a line of priests ordained to stand between man and God. All this made them honorable.

Conjointly with this special privilege they were honored by being chosen to special service. They were to conserve the knowledge of the true God amid surrounding idolatry, and they were to maintain a testimony for holiness in the center of abounding wickedness. They were ordained to be a holy nation, a peculiar people, sanctified unto the Lord to show forth the praise of Jehovah. They were honored by His constant Presence with them. No other nation saw God go before them in pillars of cloud and fire--nowhere else did the Shekinah blaze forth except between the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the Mercy Seat.

He had not so dealt with any other nation--only to His chosen people had He been pleased to reveal Himself. They were favored with special protections in Providence, with special guidance in all their difficulties, special supplies in time of famine. And if they sometimes had special chastisements, yet even these were but tokens of His peculiar regard. Israel was precious in the sight of God, and therefore, though small and inconsiderable, it was honorable among the nations, so that David could truthfully say, "What one nation in the earth is like Your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem

for a people to Himself?"

I need not dwell upon God's special love to Israel. We believe it continues to this hour, and though the scattered nation is despised, and the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter--yet the day shall come when "There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Then Judea's mountains, (Your land, O Immanuel), shall drop down with new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk. Then the glorious diadem of her former glory shall return to Zion's brow, and God, even her own God, shall bless her. The Covenant of salt shall be remembered, and it shall be soon that the Lord has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow.

We must not leave this point without noticing how true it was that because the Israelite people were so favored of God, He gave men for them, and people for their life. Egypt had to see the death of all its first-born for Israel's sake. The Canaanites were utterly exterminated to make room for the tribes. And when mighty kings came against the chosen people, they, too, were smitten with terrible destructions. Sennacherib's host withered like autumn leaves when "the angel of death spread his wings on the blast," for Israel must be saved.

If the people were carried captive for their sins, yet in captivity they became like the firebrand amidst the dry stubble, for Babylon was destroyed for their sakes--the hammer of the nations was broken in pieces that the exiles might be set free to worship the Lord at Jerusalem. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba were all thrown into the scale together, and made nothing of in comparison with the elect nation. He gave men for them, or as the Hebrew reads it, he gave man for them, as though the whole race of man, with all its interests, were made to yield to the interests of the one chosen people. Thus dear was the seed

of faithful Abraham to Jehovah's heart. I dare not take such a text as this is without first of all giving you its original and natural signification, and I doubt not that it is as I have now declared it.

This passage may, however, without the slightest wrenching of it from its connection, as I believe, and certainly without any distortion of its meaning, be applied to the spiritual Israel, namely, to Christ's chosen Church, which He has redeemed with His blood. Now this Church of God is, and always has been, precious in God's sight. Not that there was anything of natural excellency in His elect why they should be chosen. Not that in the whole of them put together there was any value above the rest of the sons of men. But because the Lord, having been pleased to choose them, put by that very act a preciousness upon them which otherwise had not been there.

They are now precious to God, because, having loved them from of old, that ancient love sets a stamp of preciousness upon them in the dear memories of the past eternity. His goings forth in love to His people were of old--yes, He has loved them with an everlasting love, and therefore they are dear to Him. The Church is precious because His purposes of Grace mainly relate to it, and His other purposes are made subservient to the glory of His Grace in them. The bounds of the nations has He set according to the number of His chosen. The arrangements of Providence have all been disposed with an eye to them. All things work together for their good, and for the achievement of their ultimate perfection.

God is pleased to reckon them as His crown jewels--His peculiar treasure--because He sees in them the purchase of His Son's agonies. They have been bought with a price far above gold and silver. And by the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary, they are made most precious in the esteem of the Most High. They are precious, because in them, above

all others, His Glory is to be revealed. He has displayed it in Nature. He manifests it in Providence. But peculiarly He intends to illustrate all His attributes in His Church, when she shall be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus her Lord.

Exceedingly precious is the Church to God, and for this cause she is in the highest sense honorable. Even in her lowest estate, when despised and persecuted, the Church has still been honorable. In dark days and times of deep depression,

when her candle was ready to go out, still was she honorable in the sight of the Most High. She was honorable because of her character, for she is holiness unto the Lord. Honorable because of her nearness to His Son, for is she not the "bride, the Lamb's wife"? Honorable because of the service entrusted to her to bear witness for the Truth of the one God and the glory of the one Mediator. She is honorable because of the destiny which awaits her, when she shall be taken up to dwell with her Lord forever, and reign with Him world without end.

Brethren, the men of this world do not see as yet the excellency of the Church, but then they saw not the glory of Christ. They thought Him a "root out of a dry ground," and therefore it is not al all remarkable if they defame the Church as a despicable nest of fanaticism. But as He shall appear, and in the latter days His Glory shall strike all eyes, so shall His true Church be revealed also, and the nations that once despised her shall be glad to bow down and lick the dust of her feet.

Let us hold in high esteem the Church of God, the secret and mystical Church first, and the outward and visible Church next, as her representative.

I grieve when I hear some speaking as though the organized Church of God were a thing to be ignored or snuffed at. There have been many efforts made extra in the Church of God, and I would not for a moment

have prevented one of them. But I have observed, and I think all must have done so, that the results of work disconnected with the Church of Christ have been but meager. God will bless the world, after all, through His Church. And your irregular efforts, though He shall own them, and they may be ordained by Him for a purpose, yet can never supersede the regular action of His people associated together in Church fellowship.

Neither do I believe that operations which ignore a true and visible Church of Christ ever will be permanent, at least never so permanent as that work which springs out of a Church ordered according to the Apostolic rule, working under the Divine sanction, prayerfully sowing in the name of Christ, and carefully ingathering to the name of Jesus the fruits of its labors. Honor the Church, for God has honored it. Unite yourself with it if up to now you have stood aloof, that you may participate in the favor which Christ accords to His people as a body. "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." This last word means, "I have taken a complacency in you." The Lord takes a delight in His Church. When God made the world he said it was good, but I do not find that He ever broke forth into any song of congratulation over His work. But when He views His Church, the new creation, we hear by the mouth of the Prophet, "He shall rest in His love, He shall rejoice over you with singing." There is that in the Church of God which makes even the august silence of God to be broken for awhile--the Triune Deity lifts up the voice of song over His chosen.

Jesus loves His Church, His delights are with the sons of men. Of all that He has ever made or done, there is nothing in which God takes such satisfaction as in the "Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven." Now rest assured, Brethren--that as for the Jewish

Church, God gave up nations, threw them away as though they were but the common pebble stones, and His Israel the only diamond among them--so will it be and so has it been in reference to His own Church bought with the blood of Christ.

It was remarked by the Reformers that at the time when the Catholic kings agreed to persecute them, they might have been crushed, but jealousy sprung up among the various monarchs. They were so engaged with wars among themselves that the Reformers were able to escape. As though the blood of thousands upon thousands might be shed that God would take care that His Gospel in the world should not be harmed. And now today what are empires and kingdoms but so many potters' vessels that shall be dashed to shivers sooner than the kingdom of Christ shall be moved?

What are you, you kings, and you great ones of the earth, though you think yourselves to be the rulers of the times and the masters of events--yet of yourselves what are you? You are crushed before the moth if you oppose the advance of the Master's empire and the spread of His Truth. Do not gloomily foretell that missionary operations will be all in vain--it is not so, it cannot be so! Our prospects are bright, bright as the promises of God. Has He not said, "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth"? God would sooner make the whole earth to quiver with earthquakes, like the leaf of the aspen in the gale, than allow one idol temple to stand fast forever. He would sooner unbind all the civil compacts of mankind until the human race became disintegrated into separate atoms, than suffer thrones and dominions to prevent the triumph of His Church, and the victory of her Lord. This line of remark seemed so naturally to spring out of the text that I could not but dwell upon it.

I now beg to conduct you to the consideration which most forcibly

strikes my own mind, namely, the application of this verse to each individual Believer in Christ. To every Christian I think the Master speaks, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable and I have loved you." Three things are in this text, "precious," "honorable," "Beloved." O Believer, if you have Grace to suck the honey out of these, it shall be a happy day for you!

I. Believer, the first wonderful adjective of the text is applicable to you--you are "PRECIOUS." Notice how that preciousness is enhanced beyond the superlative degree by the next words, "precious in My sight." There are mock jewels now made which are so exactly like rubies, emeralds, and diamonds that even those who are connoisseurs of precious stones are deceived--and yet these imitations are not precious. They are not precious in the sight of the lapidary, who is able to put them to severer tests--with him these mimicries are soon proved to be of little value.

The degree of preciousness depends much upon the person who forms the judgment. And what estimate can be so accurate as that of God the Infallible? What judgment can be so severely exacting as that of God the infinitely Holy? How precious must a Believer be if he is precious in God's sight? For the things that are precious in man's sight, what are they to Him? What cares the Most High for all the diamonds of Golconda, or all the gold and silver that could be heaped together, though they should compose ranges of mountains like the Himalayas, all of precious ore? The golden mass would be nothing more than sordid dust in the sight of the Most High. He esteems not these things, but His poor and afflicted people are precious in His sight. It sometimes appears to unbelief as if it would be a comfortable thing to escape from-- God's sight--so that our unworthiness might be hidden.

"Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is

covered." We imagine in dark moments that it would be a great mercy to be ourselves covered and kindly forgotten by the Most High. But, Brethren, instead of that we are always in God's sight--placed as fully there as we shall be in the Day of Judgment. And, though His thoughts are not mistaken about us, and His judgment is not premature, for He knows precisely what we are, have been, shall be--yet He calls us precious!

Ah, you humble Believers who are far from being precious in your own sight, and perhaps esteemed as worthless in the sight of those that know not the Grace of God--sit down and contentedly roll this under your tongue as a sweet morsel--you are precious in the sight of the Lord! If you are, indeed, the Lord's by faith in Christ Jesus, worked in you by the Holy Spirit, you are precious in the Father's sight.

This preciousness, my Brothers and Sisters, cannot arise from anything essentially and intrinsically precious in us by nature, for we confess freely that we are even as others in our natural estate. The quarry out of which we were hewn was no quarry of precious things, and the pit out of which we have been dug was no pit in which rare stones were glittering. We were taken from common clay and out of the ordinary ruin of mankind. Yet God says we are precious, and the fact of our former degradation and fallen estate cannot dispute the Divine declaration. Fallen, depraved, and ruined, as we once were--yet for all that--we are precious in God's sight! How is this?

Why, methinks it springs out of four considerations. We are precious in the sight of God because of the memories which cluster round each one of us. Jacob said of a certain portion that he would give it to Joseph--"I have given to you one portion above your Brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." Evidently the Patriarch set great store by that portion because it bad

been won amid the hazards of actual warfare. It might not have been so valuable in itself as others of his possessions, but he thought much of it because he remembered the risks he ran in winning it to himself.

And you, Child of God, you are the portion which Jesus took out of the hand of the Amorite with His sword and with His bow. For you He undertook the strife of battle and trod the winepress alone, that He might redeem you from the tyrant who held you in bondage and make you to be His peculiar heritage forever. You have at home today some trifle which, notwithstanding its little value, you would not sell for a thousand times its weight in gold because it belonged to a son or to a daughter since departed this life. That little memento is connected with some deed of daring, or act of generous self-denial on the part of your beloved child--and though in itself it is nothing--you count it very precious.

Now, to the Father, you, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, are memorials of the Savior's condescension in taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of human flesh. You are a memorial of His being found in fashion as a Man, and becoming subject to death, even the death of the Cross. As God looks at each of you He sees what

His Son has done, beholds in you the griefs of Calvary, bears anew the sighs of Olivet and the groans of Golgotha. You are to God, therefore, most precious, as the token and memorial of the death of Jesus Christ.

Things become precious, sometimes, on account of the workmanship exercised upon them. Many an article has been in itself intrinsically of small account, but so much art has been exercised upon it, so much real work thrown into it, that the value has been increased indefinitely. I think I have heard of the raw material being worth scarcely a single penny, and yet so much skill has been used that

occasionally even a thousand pounds in value has been attained.

Now, the Christian is precious to God on account of the workmanship that has been spent upon him. Taken as we were from among the utterly destroyed, the Holy Spirit worked in us life from the dead, subdued our stubborn wills, and enlightened our darkened understandings. He has up till this day continued to exercise upon us all His exquisite and heavenly art by which we have been molded and fashioned, and made vessels fit for the Master's use. Look back, my dear Friends, you who are precious in God's sight, to what the Holy Spirit has already done for you.

Remember the lines of the engraver's tool which He has made upon you in days of joy when he prompted you to thankfulness, to consecration, to communion? You are more likely, however, to remember those deeper strokes of the engraver's hand, made in the days of your pain and affliction. I do remember well when the Holy Spirit brought me to humiliation, to repentance, to self-purgation, to a holy vengeance against my sins and a sweet ardor for my Lord. In many ways the Great Worker has worked mightily in us and continued perseveringly to pursue His purpose.

You never took such pains with a child as the Holy Spirit has taken with you. None of you ever took so much pains to instruct your little one as He has in teaching you. Your child has never grieved you, nor vexed you to the extent that you have grieved the Holy Spirit and provoked Him. Yet still He has not ceased His work, and seeing, as He does, so much already worked in you, you are precious in His sight--for He will not cast away what He has already expended.

The Holy Spirit sees in you His own work as it will be, for being resolved to accomplish it, He beholds you not as you are just now, but as you shall be by-and-by, when "without spot or wrinkle, or any such

thing," you shall be presented before the Eternal Throne--every tendency to iniquity being eradicated, and every desire that is good and holy, and commendable, being accomplished! Therefore, for the sake of what He will make you, the Holy Spirit counts you precious.

Certain articles are precious because of their peculiar fashion. This was the case with the Portland vase, which to any common observer seemed to be of very small value, but because of the extreme beauty of the design, the greatest potter of the age was ready to pay his thousands to possess it. We are precious in God's sight, too, because of our fashion and form. For what, my Brethren, is to be the form of every Believer? We are to be made like unto Christ! There is no beauty like the form of Christ--nothing in Heaven or in earth can match the perfection of Jesus' Character.

We are to be made like He, and God, therefore, counts us very precious because He sees His Son's image in every one of us. I know you prize and hang about your neck that dear memorial of a Beloved one now in Heaven. The likeness so accurately photographed recalls to your mind the very image of the departed one. And God views every one of His people as especially precious because they are, and are to be yet more perfectly, in the likenesses of Jesus Christ.

Once more. Things are precious often because of their relationship. The most precious thing a mother has is her dear babe. We all love those who are near to us by the ties of nature. Precious, therefore, in the sight of the Lord are His saints because they are born in His household. By regeneration they are made to be His sons and daughters. Think not that God our Father has a less affection towards His sons than we have towards ours. Ah, no! No mother's heart ever yearned over her child, and no father's bosom ever rejoiced over his offspring as the heart of God yearns over His erring children-- and as His soul

rejoices when they come back to Him.

Do you call your child precious, and would you give your very life that you might preserve it? Even thus precious, O Believer, are you to your heavenly Father at this hour. I cannot preach on such a word as this--the theme is too sweet for language. But I wish that in your quietude you would silently sit down and turn this over--"I, poor, feeble, sinful worm as I am, yet, since I am chosen by distinguishing Grace and made to lay hold on eternal life in Christ Jesus, I am precious to God! My precious things I put under lock and key to preserve them. I view them with satisfaction and set great store by them. Even so will the great God hide me in His secret places. He delights to commune with me, and rejoices in me as He views me in Christ Jesus. I am more precious to Him than my own child is to my heart."

Why, here is comfort for you, even if you are very poor, or bitterly persecuted. Perhaps you have, like Hannah, to suffer day by day sneering and bitter words from your adversary, who vexes you sorely to make you fret. Why, then, let this Truth of God console you--you are precious in the sight of the Lord, and therefore you may sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." How it should make your spirit exult! How precious ought your thoughts of God to be to yourself, since you are precious in the sight of the Most High!

II. But we must pass on briefly to the second choice word. Every child of God is, in the second place, "HONORABLE." If things go on as they do now, I do not know whether this word "honorable" will not be so degraded that a man will be ashamed to wear it. We who see lords dishonoring themselves will have to thank God that we are not lords, but men. Speak of the scum of society, it seems pretty clear that as

the scum of every pot is on the top, so is it with the nation.

We are reaching a pretty state of things, certainly, when the highest sin is to be found in the highest places. God grant that our great ones may mend their manners, for it is a crying shame and a detestable scandal when those who are accounted honorable and noble by birth cannot be even decently moral. God grant our nation better lights and ornaments than these. But, my Friends, this grand old word was written when it was untarnished, and in its virgin purity. If it has now come to be ordinarily meaningless or a mockery, let us now restore it to its pristine luster and see it glow on the page of Scripture as gold seven times purified with fire. Every Christian is in God's sight right honorable and excel-lent--because the Lord in His discriminating Grace has made him precious.

First, every Christian is honorably born. Never mind how lowly your earthly parentage--you have been born unto God by the Holy Spirit--and therefore descended from the King of kings. It matters not though no blue blood may run in your veins, and you cannot trace your pedigree to any of the Norman invaders. If you can trace your pedigree up to the Lord of hosts, Himself, through being "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," you belong to the blood imperial, and to the seed royal--and you may therein rejoice! God has made you honorable, no matter who despises you.

The Christian is moreover honorable in rank. God has been pleased to take us from the dunghill to set us among princes. Rank in the order of Providence exists in all societies. Not only among men, but among pure spirits we have reason to believe there are various degrees and orders. But the nobility of holy men is everywhere paramount in God's sight. Man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, stands second to none in the whole range of created intelligences. Nearest to God stands a Man. "You

have put all things in subjection under His feet, You have set Him over all the works of Your hands."

In the Person of Jesus Christ man stands next to Deity, I mean man twice born--man renewed by the Holy Spirit. What lofty dignity is this, that even angels should be only "ministering spirits sent forth to minister" to us, our commissioned bodyguards commanded to pitch their tents around us! They are our servitors to bear us up in their hands lest at any time we dash our feet against a stone! Speak of lords spiritual--these are they--the spiritual seed of Abraham! Speak of kings and princes and peers of the blood royal--these are they--in whom Jesus Christ's Spirit dwells--who are Brethren to the august First-Born.

Honorable, then, in birth, and honorable in rank, and right honorable in their service, are Believers. For what blessed employment is that which God has sent us on? He has sent us into the world to bear witness of the Truth. He has bid us proclaim the name of Jesus to the utmost bounds of the earth. He has sent us to seek after the lost sheep of the house of Israel. I know of no service that can be more distinguished than the doing of good, the scattering of blessings among the sons of men. Methinks the very angels before the Throne might envy us poor men who are permitted to talk of Christ even though it is but to little children. I reckon the most humble Ragged school teacher to be more honored than even Gabriel himself, in being commissioned to tell out the story of the Cross, and to win youthful hearts to the Savior's service!

You are not employed as scullions in your Master's kitchen, though you might be content with such a service. You are not made as His hired servants, to toil in meanest drudgery. You are not sent to be hewers of

wood and drawers of water, but you are His friends, the friends of Jesus, to do such work as He did. And even greater works than He did are

you enabled to do, because He has gone to His Father. "This honor have all the saints," the honor of being gentlemen-at-arms under Jesus, the Captain of their salvation.

Christians are honorable also in privilege. It was accounted an eminent honor when a nobleman had the right to go in to his king whenever he willed to proffer a request. Approach to the royal throne was always, among Orientals, considered to be the highest token of regard. O child of God! You have access into this Grace in which we stand--you are permitted to come boldly to the Throne of the heavenly Grace to obtain Grace in your time of need! You are especially honored, O you saints, for we are "a people near unto Him." Every middle wall of partition is broken down, and you are brought near by the blood of Christ. Oh, what privileges are these! You are this day priests to offer acceptable sacrifices, kings to rule over your corruptions. Never were men so privileged as you upon whom the Lord's love has descended to make you precious in His sight!

And every child of God who is what he should be, becomes, through Grace, honorable by his achievements--and this is, in some respects, the highest form of honor--to be honored for what you have been enabled to do. To wear a coat of arms which you have fairly won in battle, and honors that are not merely attributed to you by the heraldic pencil, but which are due to you because of your victorious feats of arms! Every child of God shall have this honor if he is led earnestly to strive after it. To conquer sin is no small achievement. To keep down through a long life the corruptions of the flesh, to contend against the world and the devil--these are no deeds of carpet knights.

And what an achievement it will be when Satan shall be bruised beneath our feet, as he shall be shortly, when the hosts of Hell, with all their craft and malice, shall find themselves utterly overthrown by the men and women whom they despised--those in whom God's Grace so dwelt that they were victorious and carried the banner of Truth and goodness onward to complete victory! God grant you, Brethren, as you have already the honor of birth and rank this day, and as you have proffered to you the honor of service, that you may be honorable through your achievements, being precious in God's sight.

III. We come now to the last of these notable words, which is "BELOVED"--"I have loved you." I must decline to preach on this word. It is not a word for talk, but thought. I always feel that the love of God to His people is more fit for contemplation than public discourse. "I have loved you." Come, heir of Heaven, listen a moment. God has loved you eternally. Before the stars began to shine and before the sun knew his place and poured forth his oceans of light, God loved you in particular.

He has loved you actively and effectually, given His Only-Begotten for you--an unspeakable gift--giving you everything in Him--a boundless dowry of love. He has loved you pre-eminently, better than the angels, for unto which of them has He ever said, "You were honorable, and I have loved you"? He has loved you unchangeably, never less, and never more. In all your sin the same. In all your sorrow, still the same. He has loved you immeasurably. You can never know the heights and depths of your God's love to you. O Man, plunge yourself into this river! If you have up to now gone wading into it up to the ankles, now get breast high and heart high into it--yes, commit yourself to the fathomless stream, and swim in it as in a sea of bliss. "I have loved you." Let that dwell richly in your heart, and ring out celestial music for your

comfort and delight!

These three things being put together, I want you, practically, this morning, as they are your own by faith, to make use of them in other senses. "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." My Savior, do You say that? Why, those words You put into my mouth to give back to You! You also are precious in my sight. Is He not so--precious beyond comparison? Therefore is He honorable in our esteem. Will you not honor Him? Shall it not be the continual strife of your soul to get Him renown? Will you not talk of His fame to others? Will you not spread abroad the glory of His mighty acts?

My Savior, once I knew You not, but now I prize You, and by Your Divine Grace my heart sees how precious You are. Now, therefore, You are honorable in my soul. Reign, reign over every heart, as well as over mine. Gladly would I seat You on a glorious high throne, and be content to be trampled in the mire, if I could lift You but one inch higher, or get to Your name but one grain more of love among the sons of men. "You have been honorable, and I have loved You."

I am afraid, if you make this confession you will have to blush as you make it. You have loved Him, but, oh, how little have you loved Him! Look not back, then, except with penitence, but from now on say, "Lord, You have been honorable, I will love You. Forgive the past, kindle in my soul a fresh flame of Grace, help me to say--

'Yes, I love You and adore,
O for Grace to love You more!'" When you have so used those words, turn them in another direction. Apply them next to every child of God. Since you, my Brother, since you, my Sister, were precious in my sight, and you have been so ever since I knew how precious a child of God was, you have been honorable, and I have loved you.

Let us never think of the children of God in any other way than as honoring them. Some of them are very poor. Many of them illiterate. Some of them not altogether in temper, action, or creed what we might desire them to be. But if they are bought with the blood of Christ, they are honorable. The Lord declares them so, and let us not treat them dishonorably. It is a very sad thing when poor saints are despised by those who happen to be better off. If some great noble were to come into this House of Prayer, how many of you would be glad to give him the best seat, and yet he might be one of the worst of men?

But if a child of God should happen to be so poor that he must wear garments that are all but rags, and must live in a miserable cottage, there are many who will scarcely own him as a Brother. We who understand what spiritual worth is should never fall into this error.

We should say, "You, poor as you are, have become precious in our sight for Jesus' sake. We see you are an heir of Heaven, and therefore we prize you above all kings and princes, and we love you for the Master's sake. Can we help your poverty? Can we cheer your sickness? Can we bear a part of your burden? We love you and count you honorable for the sake of Jesus, our Lord and yours."

Once again. You might use these words in reference to unconverted men and women. There is a certain sense in which they are applicable to all born of woman, for they possess immortal souls. Years ago you and I knew nothing of the value of our own souls, and were not likely to care for those of others. But now the souls of men are precious in our sight. We believe them to be immortal. We know that they are to live forever in misery or forever in bliss. And therefore, let others say what they will, we can never think of the human soul but as a very precious and priceless thing.

And now, if that is the case, how honorable all men become as objects

of our zeal! "Honor all men," says the Apostle--a text I do not hear quoted half so often as that other, "Honor the king." Do not forget the last, but take equal care of the first. There is, because of its spiritual and immortal nature, a dignity about the soul of the meanest man--which no degree of poverty or degradation can altogether take away. The harlot in the streets--how few will care for her! But, O you tender hearts, as you look on the poor fallen one, say, "Since your soul was precious in my sight as an immortal spirit, you have been no longer despised and trampled on, but I have loved you as my Savior loved you, and for His sake I esteem your soul as an honorable, priceless thing."

Do not think of the thousands in prison today as though they were just so much filth to be gotten rid of. Do not think, above all, of the great mass of the needy and destitute classes of society as though they were a mere encumbrance of the common man, the mere rubbish to be swept away and laid in heaps in the workhouse or on foreign shores. No, they are precious. As precious is their soul as yours. Think of them in that respect--and honor the immortal spark that is in them--the manhood that God has been pleased to create. Honor that, and as you honor it, love it--and prove your love by praying that God will save it, by using every instrument within your power to recover it from its ruin--and to bring it back to the great God to whom it belongs.

If the woman in the Gospels who lost her piece of money had said, "It is only a penny, I have more, I shall not trouble about it," she had never lighted the candle and swept the floor, and searched diligently until she found it. And if the shepherd with his ninety-and-nine sheep had said of the hundredth which went astray, "That sheep was always scabbed and worthless. Its loss is no great thing, the ninety-nine are far more precious," he would never have left the flock to go after that

which was lost. The less value you set upon your fellow men, the less earnest you will be in seeking their good.

But if you feel that they are precious to you for Christ's sake, and honorable because they are men--capable, by God's Divine Grace, of Heaven and holiness, you will set to work in God's strength to reclaim them. And God will second and bless your efforts, and you will see them saved. Gladly would I have you give yourselves for them, and the Church give people for their life. May God grant to every one in this House of Prayer, first, to be precious in the sight of God Himself. And next, to seek after others whom God has loved and whom He means to save through them.

May God lead you to give all you have--though it were Egypt, and Ethiopia, and Seba--that precious souls may be reclaimed. Send us such zeal, O Holy Spirit, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 10

The Two Builders And Their Houses

(No. 918)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house. And it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house. And it fell: and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:24-27.

THESE were the closing words of our Savior's most famous sermon upon the mount. Some preachers concentrate all their powers upon an effort to conclude with a fine thing called a peroration, which, being interpreted, means a blaze of rhetorical fireworks in the glory of which the speaker subsides. They certainly have not the example of Christ in this discourse to warrant them in the practice. Here is the Savior's peroration, and yet it is as simple as any other part of the address. Here is an evident absence of all artificial oratory.

The whole of His hill sermon was intensely earnest, and that earnestness was sustained to the end so that the closing words are as glowing coals, or as sharp arrows of the bow. Our Lord closes not by displaying His own powers of elocution, but by simply and affectionately addressing a warning to those, who, having heard His

Words, should remain satisfied with hearing, and should not go forth and put them into practice. As according to usual experience, a preacher warms to his subject as he advances and becomes more intense as he nears his final sentences--so we are bound to give the more earnest heed to the words which are now before us--words with which the Lord of all preachers concluded His memorable discourse.

Jesus had been saying many things, but these are two words to which I think He especially alluded when He said, "Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man." The first of these words was, "Enter you in" (Matt. 7:13). And the second was, "Beware" (Matt. 7:15). Our Lord had spoken of the "strait gate" of the "narrow way," and of the few who travel it, and His urgent admonition was, "Enter you in." not, "Learn you all concerning it, and then be satisfied." Not, "Find fault with the travelers and the road." Not, "Seek to enlarge the gate and widen the way," but, "Enter You in."

Be obedient to the Gospel--believe its testimony concerning Jesus--enter into fellowship with its mysteries, receive its blessings. Be travelers along its roads. "Enter you in." He who hears of the way to Heaven, but enters not into it is a foolish man. He, who hearing of the strait gate, presses to enter in, is a wise man.

Afterwards our Lord added the other admonition, "Beware." "Beware," says He, "of false Prophets." And after having dwelt for awhile on that, He added in other words, "Beware of false professions." Of false Prophets beware, for they may delude you. They may bring before you a salvation which will not save, a mere mirage that looks like the pure, cooling, refreshing stream--but which only mocks your thirst. Beware of all teaching which would lead you away from the one Savior of the souls of men.

And then He adds, "Beware of false professions," however loudly they

make you cry, "Lord, Lord." You may have in company with these professions the loftiest gifts, Such as casting out devils, and the greatest abilities, such as only Prophets possess. But they shall not avail you anything. In that day when the Master shall only accept into His marriage feast the companions of His warfare on earth, He will say to those who have not done the Father's will, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." These are two of the sayings of Christ, and they are comprehensive of almost all He ever said--"Enter you in," and, "Beware." Take heed that you do them as well as hear them.

I. We shall now proceed to the Master's parable, and will you please notice, first of all, THE TWO BUILDERS. The wise and the foolish man were both engaged in precisely the same avocations, and to a considerable extent achieved the same design. Both of them undertook to build houses. Both of them persevered in building. Both of them finished their houses. The likeness between them is very considerable. They were equally impressed with the need of building a house. They perceived the necessity of shelter from the heavy rains. They were alike desirous of being shielded from the floods and screened from the wind. The advantage of a house to dwell in was evident to both. Even thus, at this period, we have a large number in the congregation who are impressed with the conviction that they need a Savior. I am delighted to find that there is a stir among my hearers, and I trust it is a movement of God's Holy Spirit.

And as a result very many of you feel deeply that you need a refuge from the wrath to come. You now admit that you must be forgiven, justified, regenerated and sanctified, and your desires are fervent--for all which I am deeply grateful, but also deeply anxious. You are in crowds desirous of becoming builders, and although some are

wise and some foolish, up to this present we can see no difference in you. For you seem to be equally convinced that you need eternal life and a good hope for the world to come. Nor does the likeness end here--for the two builders were both alike resolved to obtain what they needed--a house. And their determination was not in words only, but in deeds--for they both resolutely set to work to build.

In the same way there are among us at this hour many who are resolved that if Christ is to be had, they will have Him. And if there is such a thing as salvation, they will find it. They are very earnest, intensely earnest, and though some of them will fail, and some of them succeed, yet up to this point they are all alike, and none but He who searches all hearts can discern the slightest difference. I look with sadness upon the two pilgrims, with their faces zealously turned toward Zion, and I am sad as I wonder which one will find the Celestial City, and which will join with Formalist and Hypocrisy, and perish on the Dark Mountains. We are glad to hear of yearning hearts and resolute determinations, but, alas, all is not wheat that grows in wheat fields, all is not gold that glitters.

Appearances are very, very hopeful, but appearances are often deceptive. There may be a deep sense of need, and there may be a determined resolution to get that need supplied. And yet out of two seekers, one may find and the other may miss--one may be foolish and the other may be wise. These two builders seem to have been equally well skilled in architecture. The one could build a house without receiving any more instruction than the other. I do not find that there was halt or pause on the part of either because he could not turn an arch, or fix a truss. Evidently they were both skilled workmen, well acquainted with their art.

So is it with many here. They know as far as the theory goes, what the

plan of salvation is as well as I do. Yet, where the knowledge is the same, the ultimate result may vary. Two men may be equally well instructed in the Scriptures, yet one of them may be wise and the other foolish. To know what faith is, what repentance is, what a good hope in Christ is may all be yours--and yet it may but increase your misery forever. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them. It is not the hearer, but the doer of the Word, that is blessed. Knowledge puffs up--love alone builds up.

My dear Friends, I am most earnest that those of you who are desiring to find everlasting life in Christ Jesus may not be content with anything short of a true, deep, and real work of Divine Grace in your hearts. For no clearness of head knowledge, no natural earnestness of purpose or eagerness of desire can save you. Without an interest in Christ Jesus you are lost to all eternity. "You must be born again." You must be brought into vital union with the living Savior or your hopefulness will end in overwhelming destruction.

Once more, these two builders both persevered and finished their structure. The foolish man did not begin to build and then cease his work because he was not able to finish, but, as far as I know, his house was finished with as much completeness as the other. And, perhaps furnished quite as well. If you had looked at the two structures, they would have seemed equally complete from basement to roof, and yet there was a great difference between them in a most essential point. Even thus, alas, many persevere in seeking salvation until they imagine that they have found it! They abide for years in the full belief that they are saved.

They cry, "Peace, peace," and write themselves down among the blessed--and yet a fatal error lies at the base of all their religion.

All their hopes are vain, and their lifework will prove to be a

terrible failure. The builders are much alike up to this point, but yet in reality they are wide as the poles asunder both in work and character. The one builder is wise, the other foolish. The one superficial, the other substantial. The one pretentious, the other sincere. The wise man's work was honest work where men's eyes could not judge of it. The other's work was only well worked above ground--there was nothing of reality in the hidden parts. And therefore in due time the first builder rejoiced as he saw his house outlive the storm. The other, with his house, was swept away to total destruction.

II. Thus much upon the two builders, let us now think upon THEIR TWO HOUSES. One chief apparent difference between the two edifices probably was this--that one of them built his house more quickly than the other. The wise man had to spend a deal of time in excavation work. Luke tells us that he dug deep and laid his foundation on a rock. Now that rock-blasting, that carving and cutting of the hard granite, must have consumed days and weeks.

The foolish builder had not this delay to encounter. The sand was all smooth and ready for him. He was able to commence at once to lay his courses of brick and raise the walls with all rapidity. But all haste is not good speed, and there are some who travel too fast to hold. Unsound professors are often very rapid in their supposed spiritual growth. They were yesterday unconverted--today they become Believers--tomorrow they begin to teach and the next day they are made perfect. They appear to be born of full stature, and equipped at all points, like Minerva, when, according to the fable, she leaped from the brain of Jupiter. They come up in a night, and alas, too often, like Jonah's gourd, they perish also in a night!

Now I raise not a question concerning the genuine character of sudden

conversions. I believe that sudden conversions are among the best and truest forms of conversion. Take, for instance, that of the Apostle Paul. But still there are among those who profess to have been suddenly converted a sadly numerous company who answer to the description I have just given. They build very, very quickly--much too quickly for the masonry to be well constructed and lasting. It may be that some mourner is lamenting bitterly that he makes very slow progress in Grace.

"I have been seeking God in prayer," says one, "these months. I have been humbled and broken down under a sense of sin for weeks. And I have only as yet had now and then a glimpse of hope when I have been able to turn my eye to the crucified Savior. I have as yet few consolations, and many doubts. I gladly would have the full light of love in my heart, but the dawning is slow in breaking." Well, Friend, you are building slowly, but if it is surely, you shall have no cause to regret that deep digging. Small cause will you have to mourn that it took you longer to arrive at peace than it did your hasty friend, if your peace shall last you to eternity, while his hope shall be a possession in cloudland, driven away by the wind.

Of the two houses, one was built, I doubt not, with far less trouble than the other. Digging foundations in hard rocks, as I have said, takes time, and it also involves labor. Oftentimes did that wise builder pause to wipe the sweat from his brow. Oftentimes did he retire to his bed worn out with his day's work, and yet there was not a stone appearing above the soil. His neighbor, opposite, had run up the walls, had reached the gable, was almost about to put on the roof, before there was scarce a foot above the ground of the wise builder's structure.

"Ah," said he of the sandy foundation, "your toil is needless, and you have nothing to show for it. See how quickly my walls have risen, and

yet I don't slave as you do! I take things easily. I neither bore myself nor the rocks, and yet see how my house springs up, and how neat it looks? Your old-fashioned ways are absurd! You dig and hammer away down below there as if you meant to pierce the center of the earth. Why not use your common sense, and go ahead as I do? Away with your sighing and groaning, do as I do, and rejoice at once. Anxiety will kill you."

After this fashion are truly awakened souls like "lamps despised of those who are at ease." One man jumps, as it were, into peace, and boasts himself secure. Whether he is correct or not in his confidence, he does not pause to question--he is too comfortable to have time to enquire into that matter. The estate is fair, why worry about the title deeds? The feast is rich, why tarry for the wedding garments? If a doubt should arise, the carnally secure man ascribes it to Satan, and puts it aside--whereas it is not Satan, but his own conscience and the warning voice of Heaven which bid him take heed and be not deceived. The prayer for the Lord to search and try his heart and his reins, he never sincerely offers. Such a man does not like self-examination, and cannot endure to be told that there must be fruits meet for repentance. He takes things as guesswork, comes to rash conclusions, and shuts his eyes to disagreeable facts. He dreams that he is rich and increased in goods, whereas he is naked, and poor, and miserable. Alas, what a waking will his be! His more serious companion,

aroused at the same time is, on the other hand, far more diffident and self-distrustful. When he prays his heart groans before God, yet he fears he does not pray aright, and never rises from his knees content with himself.

He is not quite so soon satisfied about the reality of his faith as the other. "Perhaps," he says, "after all, it is not the faith of God's elect." He examines himself whether he is in the faith. He trembles

lest he should have the form of godliness without the power. He is afraid of shams and counterfeits, and is for buying gold tried in the fire. "My repentance," he says, "am I sure it is a real loathing of sin as sin, or did I only shed a tear or two under the excitement of a revival service? Am I sure that my nature is renewed by the work of the Holy Spirit, or is it mere reformation?"

You see, this second man has much exercise of soul. He labors to enter into rest, lest by any means he should seem to come short of it. He has many strivings, many anxieties, many searching of heart because he is sincere and fears to be deceived. From him the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence--he finds the gate strait and the way narrow--and that the righteous scarcely are saved.

Be thankful, dear Hearer, if you are among this second class--for these are the true sons of God and heirs of immortality. Your house costs you more to build, but it will be worth the cost. O beware of wearing the sheep's clothing without the sheep's nature! Beware of saying, "Lord, Lord," while you are the servant of sin! Beware of getting up fictitious religion--borrowing your experience from biographies--picking up godliness secondhand from your parents, friends, and acquaintances! Whatever it may cost you of heartbreak and agony, see to it that the sure foundation is reached, and the house so built that it will endure the trials which will inevitably test it. I would gladly saturate my speech with tears, so weighty and so needful do I feel this caution to be--both to myself and you.

I should think that in the course of time, although the foolish builder built with so much less cost, and so much more rapidly, his walls would be liable to very ugly settlements. For walls that have no foundation--that are but piled up on the sand--would every now and then gape wide with hideous cracks. And stones would move here, and timbers

would slip there, and cement and stopping would need much repair. What work for daubers and plasterers to make the ruinous fabric look like decent masonry! Very likely when a settlement crack was covered up in one place, another would happen in the next wall.

For with such a foundation it would be hard to keep the structure together, and in the long run I should not wonder but what it would cost the foolish builder more pains to keep up his wretched edifice than it did the wise builder who labored so hard with his foundation at the first. Mark you well that mere formal religion and hypocrisy in the end become a very difficult affair to maintain. The man has to struggle hard to patch up his reputation, propping it up with new lies and bolstering it with fresh pretences. At one time an unrenewed will rebels fiercely and he has to feign resignation to affliction. Next an unconquered lust demands indulgence, and he has to conceal the sin with more double-distilled deceit.

The form of prayer becomes irksome, and he has to screw himself up to the horrible farce. And meanwhile his outward life is always on the verge of a slip, and he fears detection. One way and another he is continually afraid, like a thief at large who fears that the police will find him. At every puff of wind his habitation threatens to tumble about his ears. He half wishes, after all, that he had taken the trouble of digging a foundation on the rock--but with desperate resolve he puts from him the voice of caution--and will have none of its rebuke.

O dear Hearer, rest assured that Truth, after all, is the cheapest and easiest in the long run. Your gilt, your varnish, your paint, your hypocrisy will soon wear off, while the reality is at no expense for beautifying. Even as a matter of consideration for this life it will be more hard in the long run to keep up the pretentious than to maintain

the true. And then in the latter case you have God at your back, and He abhors everything unreal. I beseech you see to it that you daub not your walls with untempered mortar lest they not only come down with a crash when most you need to shelter behind them, but even now begin to show alarming signs of decay.

The higher the foolish man built, the harder work he had to keep it aright. For, of course, every tier of bricks that he laid made the weight the greater and caused the sand to give way. The nearer Heaven the builder went the sooner his wall bowed to its fall. A man who only makes it his aim to be thought a respectable man by attending a place of worship, may manage pretty well to keep up such a low wall even without a foundation. Another man who joins a worldly Church--a Church that makes no pretense of purity--can also succeed with ease. But if he joins a Church of Jesus Christ which carefully seeks to preserve purity in its membership, he has hard work to live up to the standard required of him.

Suppose, yet further, that he should become a deacon or an elder and he is devoid of Grace? His higher aim will cost him more by far--for there are more to look at him, and there is more required of him. Now he prays in public. Now he speaks a word of instruction to enquirers--and what straits and shifts the poor man is driven to--how constantly out of his own mouth is he condemned! "Why," says he in his heart, "I know nothing about these things in my soul, and yet I have to speak and act as if I were taught of God." If he becomes a preacher, he is in a still more pitiful plight. What hard work must it be, then, to keep up the character!

When the tower rises tier upon tier upon so frail a base, it leans like the tower of Pisa, and unlike that singular structure it threatens to come down with a crash. By-and-by such a trumpery thing falls in utter

ruin, and its elevation helps to hasten the catastrophe. So, dear Hearers, the more spirituality you aim at, and the more usefulness you strive for, the worse for you, unless you have a good foundation to begin with, in true sincerity and real faith. So bad is the course of unsound religion, that the further you go in it the worse it becomes. The main difference, however, between the two houses did not lay in these cracks and settlements, nor in the cheapness or rapidity of the building--it lay out of sight, underground. It was all a matter of the foundation. How many there are who suppose that if a thing is out of sight it may as well be out of mind! Who do you think is likely to dig down and see what the foundations are? "Well," says one, "I see no need for being over precise. I do not believe in being so particular. What nobody sees cannot mean anything." Many subscribe to the graceless song --

"For faith and Grace let foolish zealots fight; He can't be wrong whose life is in the right." "You pay twenty shillings in the pound, attend a place of worship, take the sacrament, are charitable and say your prayers, and never trouble about anything further"--that is the popular notion. "What is the use of fretting about your heart? That is all transcendental nonsense! What can it signify?" That is how the foolish builder comforted himself. And he doubtless sneered at the wise builder as a poor miserable creature who was overmuch righteous and melancholy. Outward appearance is everything with men, but nothing with God. The essential difference between the true child of God and the mere professor is not readily to be discovered, even by spiritual minds. But the Lord sees it. It is a secret mysterious something which the Lord prizes, "for He knows them that are His." He separates between the precious and the vile. He puts away the pretenders as dross, but He suffers no sincere heart to be destroyed.

What, then, is this important matter? I answer it is just this--beloved Hearer, if you would be built on a rock, see to it that you have a true sense of sin. I do not say that a sense of sin is a preparation for Christ, and that we ought to pull men back from the Gospel till they feel their sin. But I do believe that wherever there is true faith in Jesus there goes with it a deep abhorrence of sin. Faith without contrition is a dead and worthless faith.

When I meet with professors who talk lightly of sin, I am sure that they have built without a foundation. If they had ever felt the Spirit's wounding and killing sword of conviction, they would flee from sin as from a lion or a bear. Truly forgiven sinners dread the appearance of evil as burnt children dread fire. Superficial repentance always leads to careless living. Faith that was never bedewed with repentance never brings forth the flowers of holiness. Pray earnestly for a broken heart. Remember it is the contrite spirit which God is pleased with. Do not believe that you can have ground for rejoicing if you never saw reason for lamenting. The promised comfort is only secured to those who have been mourners

(Matt. 5: 4).

Next to this seek for real faith. Many things which men call faith are not the precious faith of God's elect. Sincere trust in Jesus Christ is counterfeited in a thousand ways--and often imitated so accurately that only by rigid self-examination can you discover the cheat. You must lie flat upon Christ, the Rock! You must depend entirely upon Him! All your hope and all your trust must be in Him. If you believe with the heart, and not nominally, you are safe, but not otherwise. You must have true repentance and real faith--or you are foolish builders.

Furthermore, seek an inwrought experience of Divine Truth. Ask to have it burnt into you. Why is it that people give up the Doctrines of Grace

if they fall in with eloquent advocates of free will? Why is it they renounce the orthodox creed if they meet with a smart reasoner who contradicts it? Because they have never received the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit so as to have it sealed in their hearts. I tremble for our Churches, now that false doctrine is rife, because I fear that many are not established in the Truth. I pray the Lord for you, my dear Flock, that you may know the Truth by being taught of the Lord, for then you will not be led aside. The thieves and robbers will come, but as Christ's sheep you

will not hear them. It is one thing to have a creed. It is quite another thing to have the Truth engraved upon the tables of the heart. Many fail here because Truth was never experimentally made their own. Pray, moreover, that your faith may produce personal holiness. Do not believe yourself to be saved from sin while you are living in sin. If you can find pleasure in the lusts of the flesh, you are no child of God. If you are given to drunk-enness--and, mark you, many professors are so, only they drink at home and are not seen in the streets--how dwells the Grace of God in you? If you delight in idle songs and frequenting of places of vain amusement, you need not be long in weighing yourself--you are found wanting already. If you were renewed in the spirit of your mind, you would no more love these things than an angel would.

There must be a newborn nature implanted, and where there is not this exemplified in holiness of life, you may build ever so high and prate ever so loudly about your building--it is a poor miserable shanty after all--and will fall in the last hurricane. Want of depth, want of sincerity, want of reality in religion--this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God in religion, lack of sincere dealing with one's own soul. Neglect of using the lancet with our hearts. Neglect of the

search warrant which God gives out against sin. Carelessness concerning living upon Christ--much reading about Him, much talking about Him--but too little feeding upon His flesh, and drinking of His blood--these are the causes of tottering professions and baseless hopes.

Thus have I tried to open up the parable--and I have not designed to discourage any sincere soul. My aim has been to say to you, "Make your calling and election sure. Build on Christ's love, sincerity, desire, the work of the Holy Spirit--and be not deceived."

III. So now I come, in the third place, to notice THE COMMON TRIAL OF THE TWO HOUSES. Whether your religion is true or not, it will be tried. Whether it is chaff or wheat, the fan of the Great Winnower will surely be brought into operation upon all that lies on the threshing floor. If you have dealings with God, you have to do with a "consuming fire." Whether you are really or nominally a Christian, if you come near to Christ, He will try you as silver is tried. Judgment must begin at the House of God, and if you dare to come in to the House of God, judgment will begin with you.

By the way, let us note that if there are such trials for those who profess to be Christians, what will become of you who make no profession? If the righteous scarcely are saved, where will the ungodly and the wicked appear? If judgment begin with the House of God, what will the end be of them that believe not? Terrible thought! But to return. Trials will come to profession, whether it is true or false. If I do not mistake the reference in the text to rain, flood, wind--these trials will be of three sorts at least.

The rain typifies afflictions from Heaven. God will send you adversities like showers, tribulations as many as the drops of the dew. Between now and Heaven, O Professor, you will feel the pelting storm! Like other men, your body will be sick. Or if not, you shall have

trouble in your house--children and friends will die--or riches will take to themselves wings, and fly like an eagle towards Heaven. You must have trials from God's hand. And, if you are not relying on Christ, you will not be able to bear them. If you are not, by real faith, one with Jesus Christ, even God's rain will be too much for you. But there will also arise trials from earth--"the floods came." In former days the floods of persecution were more terrible than now, but persecution is still felt. And if you are a professor, you will have to bear a measure of it. Cruel mockings are still used against the people of God. The world no more loves the true Church today than it did in olden times. Can you bear slander and reproach for Jesus? Not unless you are firmly rooted and grounded. In the day of temptation and persecution the rootless plants of the stony ground are withered away. See you to this.

Then there will come mysterious trials typified by "the winds." The prince of the power of the air will assail you with blasphemous suggestions, horrible temptations, or artful insinuations. He knows how to cast clouds of despondency over the human spirit. He can attack the four corners of the house at once by his mysterious agency. He can tempt us in many ways at the same time, and drive us to our wits' end. Woe to you, then, unless you have something to hold to better than the mere sand of profession!

Where there is a good foundation trials will do no harm. But where there is no foundation they will frequently bring the man's profession down in ruin, even in this life. How many lose their religion at the very outset! Pliable and Christian both set out for the Celestial City, both aspiring to the crown of gold. But they fell into the Slough of Despond. And

then one of them struggled out on the side nearest his own house, and

went back to the City of Destruction. The other strove manfully to reach the further shore--the difference between the wise and foolish pilgrim was made manifest.

After Christians have proceeded further they will be tried in other ways. Infidelities often try Christians. I mean doubts about the essentials of the faith and all its doctrines. And those that are not well cemented to the Rock are easily moved to unbelief. This is the age of infidelities, but they who are on the Rock by a truthful experience are not moved. A Negro was once told by a friend that some man had said the Bible was not true. Now, our poor friend had never thought anybody could doubt the Bible, but his quick way of disposing of the novel difficulty was, "Dat Book not true? Why, I take it into my house and I sit down and read it, and it make my heart laugh. How can it be a lie, dat make my heart laugh? I was a drunkard, a thief, and a liar, and dat Book talked to me and made me a new man--dat Book no lie." The very best proof in the world surely, at least to the man himself, if not to others.

We who have had our hearts made to laugh by God's Word cannot be laughed out of our faith. We have lived on the Word and proved its truthfulness by experience--and are therefore invulnerable to all attacks--while strangers to such experience are staggered. Where the heart is really grounded upon the Truth, you will find that heresies as well as infidelities have but little effect. The sound Christian is like a stone--if he is thrown into the pool of false doctrine, he may be wet by it--but he does not receive it into his inner self. Whereas the unsound professor is like a sponge, he sucks it all in greedily and retains what he absorbs.

How many there are who are tried by worldliness, and if their religion is but a mere profession, worldliness soon eats the heart of it as does

a canker, and they become even as others! If, however, the Christian man's heart is right with God, he comes out and is separate, and the pride of life does not entrap him. In cases of backsliding, where there is a sound heart towards God, the backslider is soon brought back. But where the heart is rotten, the backslider goes from bad to worse. I was struck with a story of two men who were accustomed to give exhortations at meetings, who had fallen out with each other. One of their Brothers, who grieved to think two servants of God should be at differences with each other, went to reconcile them.

He called upon the first, and said, "John, I am very sorry to find you and James have quarreled. It seems a great pity, and it brings much dishonor on the Church of God." "Ah," said John, "I am very grieved, too, and what grieves me most is that I am the sole cause of it. It was only because I spoke so bitterly that James took offense." "Ah, ah," said the good man, "we will soon settle this difficulty, then," and away he went to James. "James, I am very sorry that you and John cannot agree." "Yes," he said, "it is a sad thing we don't, we ought to do so, for we are Brothers. But what troubles me most is that it is all my fault. If I had not taken notice of a little word John said, there would have been an end of it."

The matter, as you may guess, was soon rectified. You see there was at the bottom a true friendship between them, so that the little difficulty was soon overcome. And so where there is a true union between God and the soul, the backsliding will soon be recovered.

IV. To close. Haying thus mentioned the common trials and the effects produced in this life, let me now remind you of the DIFFERENT RESULTS OF THE TRIALS in reference to the life to come. In the one case, the rain descended very heavily, and threatened to wash the house away, but it was built on a rock, and not only did the house stand, but the man

inside found great comfort in it. He could hear the pelting torrent beating on the roof, and sit and sing. When the gusts came against the windows he would only be the more happy to think he had such a shelter. Then came the floods. They would, if they could, have sapped and undermined the foundations, but they took no effect on the granite rock. And though the wind howled round the habitation, every stone was well cemented and all bound as with iron bands to the grand old Rock--and therefore the man was safe and happy within. And above all, he was grateful that he had built on such a Foundation. He could sit down and sing--

"Loud may the troubled ocean roar, In sacred peace my soul abides." The Christian rests peacefully upon Christ. Troubles come one after another, but they do not sweep him away--they only endear to him the hope which is based upon Christ Jesus. And when at last death comes, that awful flood which will undermine everything that can be removed--it cannot find anything to shake in the wise builder's hope! He rests on what Christ has Done--death cannot affect that. He believes in a faithful God. And dying cannot affect that. He believes in the Covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well. He lays hold on the "shalls" and "wills" of an immutable God, all sealed with the blood of the Redeemer! Death cannot affect any of these. And when the last great trumpet sounds, and the last fire that shall try every man's work of what sort it is comes forth from the Throne of God, the man who in true sincerity and with real experience has laid hold on Christ is not afraid of the tremendous hour.

What? Though the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long, and the dead awake, and the angels gather round the Great White Throne! And the pillars of Heaven tremble, and the earth is dissolved, and the elements

melt with fervent heat--the man of God feels that the Rock on which he has built can never fail him, and the hope that Divine Grace has given him can never be removed. He smiles serenely amid it all.

But look at the case of the man whose hope is built on sand! He could hardly endure the trials of life. He almost fell under common temptation. He turned his coat during the hour of persecution. But sorer trials now await him. Some hypocrites have been bolstered up even in the last moments, and perhaps have never known that they were lost till they felt they were. Like Dives, of whom it is written, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." He had never lifted up his eyes before. He did not know his condition till he actually realized it in all its misery. But the most of men who have come under the sound of the Gospel, and made a profession--if they have been deceivers find it out at death--and it must be a dreadful thing to make that discovery when pain is sharp and parting is bitter.

Ah, dear Friend, if you are mistaken, may you find it out now, and not on your deathbed. May your prayer be, "Lord, show me the worst of my case. If my profession has been a mistake, O let me not build up and prop up a rotten thing, but help me to build aright upon the Rock of Ages." Pray that prayer, I beseech you. Remember, if death should not teach you the whole Truth of your case, judgment will. There will be no mistake there, and no opportunity for repentance. This fallen house was never built again. There was no salvage from the total wreck. Lost, lost, lost--there is no word to follow. For once lost, lost forever! O dear Hearer, I bid you, if you have a name to live and are dead, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life!

I pray you, if you are a seeker, be not put off with empty hopes and vain confidences. Buy the Truth and sell it not. Lay hold on eternal life. Seek the true Savior and be not content till you have Him, for if

lost, your ruin will be terrible! Oh, that lake! Have you ever read the words, "Shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death"? The Lake of Fire! And souls cast into it! The imagery is dreadful. "Ah," says one, "that is a metaphor." Yes, I know it is, and a metaphor is but a shadow of the reality. Then if the shadow is a lake of fire, what must the reality be? If we can hardly bear to think of a "worm that never dies," and a "fire that never shall be quenched," and of a lake whose seething waves of fire that dash over undying and hopeless souls--what must Hell be in very deed?

The descriptions of Scriptures are, after all, but condescensions to our ignorance--partial revelations of fathomless mysteries. But if these are so dreadful, what must the full reality be? Provoke Him not, my Hearers--tempt not your God! Neglect not the great salvation, for if you do, you shall not escape. Play not with your souls! Be not heedless and careless of the realities of eternity! But now, even now, may God hear your prayer as you breathe it from your inmost souls, and give you truly to be washed in the precious blood, and effectually saved by Him, in Whom there is fullness of Truth and Grace. Amen.

"My God, I mark with fear How many hopes decay, And like the foolish builder's house Fall in the trial day. Perhaps amid this throng
You do a soul espy
Whose towering hopes are built on sand,
I ask, 'Lord, is it I?'
A thousand doubts arise,
I bring them all to You.
Am I unconsciously deceived?
Lord, search my heart and see.
O teach me deep to dig
Down to the solid Rock,

That when tornadoes round me sweep

My house may bear the shock.

Jesus, You only are

The sure foundation stone,

Firm as the eternal hills are You,

I build on You alone.

Cemented fast to You

No stone is laid in vain,

My hope defies the assaults of Hell,

The flood, the wind, the rain."

Chapter 11

The King Feasting in his Garden

(No. 919)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1870,

BY C.H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am come into My garden, My Sister, My Spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice. I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved." Song of Solomon 5:1.

I BELIEVE this text to be appropriate to the spiritual condition of our Church. If I am not very sadly mistaken, the Lord of Hosts is with us in a very remarkable manner. Our meetings for prayer have been distinguished by an earnest and fervent spirit. Our meetings with enquirers have been remarkably powerful. In a quiet manner, without any outward outcries, souls have been smitten down with conviction of sin, and have been comforted as they have received Christ by faith. By His Grace we are not a deserted Church, we are not left with broken hedges, with the wild boar of the wood committing devastations.

The Lord has sent a gracious rain which has quickened the seed. He has watered the plants of His garden, and made our souls to rejoice in His Presence. Now if the text is appropriate, as I believe it is, the duty to which it especially calls us should have our earnest attention. The workers for Christ must remember that even if they have to care for the garden, their chief business must be to commune with the Lord and Master of that garden, since He, Himself, this morning calls them to do so. "Eat O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved."

In happy and auspicious times, when the Spirit of God is working, it is

very natural to say, "We must now work more abundantly than ever," and God forbid that we should hinder such zeal--but more spiritual privilege is not to be put in the second place. Let us commune as well as work. For there shall we find strength for service, and our service shall be done the better, and become the more acceptable, and ensure the larger blessing. If while we serve like Martha we at the same time commune like Mary, we shall not, then, become cumbered with much serving. We shall serve and not be cumbered, and shall feel no fretfulness against others whose only faculty may be that of sitting at the Master's feet.

The text divides itself readily into three parts. First, we have the Presence of the heavenly Bridegroom--"I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse." We have, secondly, the satisfaction which He finds in His Church--"I have gathered My myrrh with My spice, I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey, I have drunk My wine with my milk." And, thirdly, we have the invitation which He gives to His loving people--"Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved."

I. The voice of the Master Himself calls us to consider HIS PRESENCE--"I am come." He tells us He is come. What? Could He come without our perceiving it? Is it not possible? May we be like those whose eyes were held so that they knew Him not? Is it possible for us to be like Magdalene, seeking Christ, while He is standing very near us? Yes, and we may even be like the disciples, who, when they saw Him walking on the water, were afraid.

They thought it was a spirit, and cried out--and Jesus said, "It is I, be not afraid," before they knew who it was! Here is our ignorance, but here is His tenderness. He may come and yet we may not recognize Him--but here when He comes, He takes care to advertise us of the

blessed fact, and calls us to observe and to consider, and to delight in it. He would, for our own comfort, prevent its being said of us, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

Let us observe, first, this coming was in answer to prayer. Our translators, in dividing the Bible into chapters, seem to have utterly disregarded the connection or the sense, so that they brought down their guillotine between two verses which must not be divided. The Church had said, "Awake, O north wind. And come, you south; blow upon my garden." She had also said, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." In answer to that prayer the Beloved replies, "I am come into My garden." Prayer is always heard, and the prayer of faithful souls finds an echo in Jesus' heart.

How quickly the spouse was heard! Scarcely had the words died away, "Let my Beloved come," before she heard Him say, "I am come!" "Before they call, I will answer. And while they are yet speaking, I will hear." He is very near unto His people, and therefore He very speedily answers their request. And how fully does He answer them, too! You will, perhaps, say, "But she had asked for the Holy Spirit--she had said, 'Awake, O north wind. And come, you south.' And yet there is no mention of the heavenly wind as blowing through the garden." The answer is that the Beloved's coming means

all that.

His visit brings both north and south wind. All benign influences are sure to follow where He leads the way! Spices always flow out from the heart when Christ's sweet love flows in--and where He is, Christians have all things in Him. There was a full answer to her prayer, and there was more than an answer, for she had but said, "Let Him come and eat," but, lo, He gathers myrrh and spice, and He drinks of wine and milk. He does exceeding abundantly above what she had asked or even

thought--after the right royal manner of the Son of God--who does not answer us according to the poverty of our expressions and the leanness of our desires, but according to His riches in Glory, giving to us Grace upon Grace out of His own inexhaustible fullness.

Brethren, this Church has had a full reward for all her prayers. We have waited upon God often, all the day long there has been prayer in this house, and during this last month there has scarcely been an hour in which supplication has been suspended. And the answer has already come. We are so apt to overlook the answer to prayer. Let it not be so. Let us praise the Lord that prayer has not been a vain service. It has brought down His Presence, the chief of all blessings, and that for which we most interceded at His Throne. Let us exalt Him!

We can hear Him say now, "I am come into your meetings, I am blessing you. I am saving souls, I am elevating some of you into nearness of fellowship with Myself. I am chastening some of your spirits with sadness to think you have lived in so groveling an estate. I am with you, I have heard your prayers, I have come to abide with you as a people."

Now, if this is the case, let us next observe what an unspeakable blessing this is! If the voice had said, "I have sent My angel," that would have been a precious benefit. But it is not so spoken. The word is, "I am come." What? Does He, before whom angels adoringly bow their heads--does He, before whom perfect spirits cast their crowns--does He condescend to come into the Church? Yes, it is even so. There is a personal Presence of Christ in the midst of His people. Where two or three are met together in His name, there is He in the midst of them. His corporeal Presence is in Heaven, but His spiritual Presence, which is all we want--all it is expedient for Him as yet to grant--is assuredly in our midst. He is with us truly and really when we meet

together in our solemn assemblies, and with us, too, when we separate and go our ways in private to fight the battles of the Lord.

Brethren, for us to enjoy His Presence as a Church is a privilege whose value is only to be measured by the melancholy results of His absence. Where Jesus Christ is not in the garden, the plants wither, and like untimely figs the fruits fall from the trees. Blossoms come not, or if they appear, they do but disappoint when Jesus is not there to knit and fructify them. But when He comes, even the driest boughs in the garden become like Aaron's rod that budded! Yes, our older Brethren in the Church remember times of trouble, times when the ministry was not with power, when the gatherings on the Lord's-Day were joyless, when the voice of wailing saddened the courts of Zion. But now we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! The contrast between the past and the joyous present should increase our gratitude till we praise the Lord on the high sounding cymbals with jubilant exaltation!

Remember, too, that if He had dealt with us according to our sins, and rewarded us after our iniquities, we should never have heard the footsteps of the Beloved traversing the garden. How many have grieved the Holy Spirit by careless living and backsliding? How have most of us followed Him afar off instead of keeping step with Him in service and fellowship? Alas, my Lord, if You had regarded only the sins of the pastor of the Church, You had long ago left this flock. But You have not dealt with us severely, but according unto Your love and to Your mercy You have blotted out our sins like a cloud. And like a thick cloud our transgressions, and still do You condescend to come into Your garden.

If you take each word of this remarkable sentence, you will find a meaning. "I am come." There is the personal Presence of Christ. "I am come." There is the certainty that it is so. It is no delusion, no

dream, no supposition. "I am truly come." Blessed be the name of the Lord, at this present time it is assuredly so! Many of His saints can bear testimony that they have seen His face and have felt the kisses of His lips, and have proven, even this day, that His love is better than wine. Note the next word, "I am come into My garden." How near is the approach of Christ to His Church! He comes not to the garden door, nor to look over the wall, nor in at the gate and out again. But into His garden.

He goes down every walk, midst the green alleys. Among the beds of spices He walks, watching each flower, pruning the superfluous foliage of every fruit-bearing plant, and plucking up by the roots such as His heavenly Father has not planted. His delights are with the sons of men. His communion with His chosen is most familiar--so that the spouse may sing, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." Jesus Christ, the Lord, forgets not His Church, but fulfils the promise--"I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment. Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

Brethren, this is a solemn as well as a pleasant fact. You who are members of this Church, remember that Jesus is come into the Church, that He is now going His rounds among you, and marking your feelings towards Him. He knows today who is in fellowship with Him, and who is not. He discerns between the precious and the vile. He never comes without the winnowing fan when He visits His threshing floor. Beware if you are as chaff. He has come into His garden. O you that have not enjoyed much of His gracious company, pray to Him to cast a look towards you, and be like the sunflower which turns its face to the sun to refresh itself with His beams. O pant and long for His Presence. If your soul is as dark as the dead of night, call out to Him, for He

hears the faintest sigh of any of His chosen.

"I am come into My garden," He says. Note here the possession which Christ claims in the Church. If it were not His garden, He would not come into it. A Church that is not Christ's Church shall have none of His Presence, and a soul that is not Christ's has no fellowship with Him. If He reveals Himself at all, it is unto His own people, His blood-bought people, the people that are His by purchase and by power--and by the surrender of themselves to Him. When I think of this Church as committed to my care, I am overawed, and well may my fellow officers be cast down under the weight of our responsibility. But after all, we may say, "Master, this garden is not ours. It is Your garden. We have not begotten all this people, neither can we carry them in our bosoms. But You, great Shepherd of the sheep, You will guard the fold." Since the garden is His own, He will not suffer even the least plant to perish. My Brethren who work for Christ--do not be downcast if certain portions of the work should not seem to succeed. He will attend to it. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." It is more His work than ours, and souls are more under His responsibility than ours. So let us hope and be confident, for the Master will surely smile upon His "vineyard of red wine."

The next word denotes cultivation. "I am come into My garden." The Church is a cultivated spot. It did not spring up by chance, it was arranged by Himself. It has been tended by Himself, and the fruits belong to Himself. Thankful are we if we can truly know that as a Church --

"We are a garden walled around, Chosen and made peculiar ground."

Christ, the Great Cultivator, exercises care and skill in training His people, and He delights to see His own handiwork in them.

And then there are the two choice words at the close by which He speaks

of His Church, herself, rather than of her work. As if He would draw the attention of His people to themselves and to Himself, rather than to their work. He says, "My Sister, My Spouse." There is one name for the garden, but there are two names for herself. The work is His work, the garden is His garden, but see, He wants communion not so much with the work as with the worker, He speaks to the Church herself. He calls her, "My Sister, My Spouse." "Spouse" has something in it of dearness that is not in the first word, for what can be dearer to the husband than the bride?

But then there was a time when the spouse was not dear to the Bridegroom, there was a period, perhaps when He did not know her, when there was no relationship between the two--though they are made of one flesh by marriage, yet they were of different families. And for this cause He adds the dear name of "Sister," to show an ancient relationship to her, a closeness and a nearness by blood, by birth, as well as by betrothal and wedlock. The two words put together make up a confection of such inexpressible sweetness, that instead of seeking to expound them to you, I will leave them to your meditations, and may He who calls the Church, "Sister," and, "Spouse," open up their richness to your souls.

Here, then, is the gist of the whole matter. The Master's Presence is in this Church in a very remarkable manner. Beloved, I pray that none of you may be like Adam, who fled among the trees to hide himself from God when He walked in the garden. May your business not act like an overshadowing thicket to conceal you from fellowship. He calls you, O Backslider, He calls you as once He called Adam--"Where are you?" Come, Beloved, come and commune with your Lord. Come away from those carking cares and anxieties which, like gloomy groves of cypress, conceal you from your Lord, or rather your Lord from you.

Don't you hear His call? "O My Dove that is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see your countenance, let Me hear your voice. For sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely." Let none of us be like the disciples in another garden when their Lord was there and He was in agony, but they were sleeping. Up, you Sleepers! Christ has come! If the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes," awoke the virgins, shall not, "I am come," awaken you? It is His own voice! It is not, "He comes," but "I am come"!

Stand up, you Slumberers! And now, with heart and soul, seek fellowship with Him! It would be a sad thing if while Christ is with us any should be slumbering, and then should wake up and say, "Surely God was in this place and I knew it not." Rather may you invite Him to come into your souls and abide with you until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, and you behold Him face to face.

II. Thus much upon the first point. And now may His Holy Spirit help us to view OUR LORD IN HIS CHURCH.

The beautiful expressions of the text are capable of many holy meanings, and it is not possible that any expositions of mine could fully unveil their treasures. But let me observe, first, that Christ is delighted with the offerings of His people. He says, "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice." We may consider myrrh and spice as sweet perfumes offered by way of incense to God--as being indicative of the offerings which His people bring to Him.

What if I say that prayer is like sweet smelling myrrh, and that the Beloved has been gathering the myrrh of holy prayer, the bitter myrrh of repenting sighs and cries in the midst of this Church, lo, these many months? You, perhaps, thought that poor wordless prayer of yours was never heard, but Jesus gathered it, and called it spice. And when some Brother was praying aloud, and in silence your tears fell thick

and fast for perishing sinners, for you could not bear that they should die, nor endure that Christ's name should be blasphemed, the Beloved gathered up the precious drops and counted them as costly oil of sweetest smell.

Was it not said in Psalm 72:15, "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually"? And you did pray for Him that His name might be as ointment poured forth, and that He might gird His sword upon His thigh and ride forth prosperously. Jesus observed and delighted in your heart's offering. Others knew not that you prayed--perhaps you thought, yourself, that you scarcely prayed--but He gathered His myrrh with His spice from you. No faithful prayer is lost. The groanings of His people are not forgotten. He gathers them as men gather precious products from a garden which they have tilled with much labor and expense.

And then, may not spice represent our praises? For these, as well as prayer, come up as incense before His Throne. Last Thursday night when my brother spoke to you, if you felt as I did, I am sure your heart sent up praise as smoke of incense from the warm coals of a censer, as he cast on them handfuls of frankincense in the form of various motives for gratitude and reasons for praise. Oh, it was good to sing God's praises as we then did by the hour together. It was delightful, too, to come to His Table and make that ordinance in very deed a service of praise to God. Praise is pleasant and comely, and most of all so because Jesus accepts it, and says, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me."

When the Lord, in another place, speaks of offering sweet cane bought with money, does He not refer to other offerings which His people bring in addition to their prayers and their praises, when they give to Him the first fruits of all their increase, and present thank offerings to His name? He has said, "None of you shall appear before Me empty," and

I hope none of you have been content to do so! The contributions given for the spread of His cause, for the feeding of His poor, and clothing of His naked ones are given by true hearts directly to Himself. Though they may be but as two mites that make a farthing, yet offered in His name are they not also included in this word, "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice"?

The Savior's satisfaction is found, in the next place, in His people's love--"I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey." Shall I be wrong if I believe that this sweetness refers to Christian love? For this is the richest of all the graces, and sweetens all the rest. Jesus Christ finds delightful solace in His people's love, both in the inward love which is like the honey, and in the outward manifestation of it, which is like the honeycomb. He rejoices in the love that drips in all its preciousness from the heart, and in the honeycomb of organization, in which it is for order's sake stored up and put into His hand.

Or, what if it should mean that Christ overlooks the imperfections of His people? The honeycomb is not good eating, but He takes that as well as the honey! "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey." As He looks upon His people, and sees what He has done for them, His loving heart rejoices in what His Grace has accomplished! As a benevolent man who has taken a child from the street and educated it would be pleased to see it growing up, prospering, happy, well-informed, talented--so when Jesus Christ, remembering what His people were, sees in them displays of Divine Grace, desires after holiness, self-denials, communion with God, and the like--this is to Him like honey. He takes an intense satisfaction in the sweet fruits which He Himself has caused us to produce. In spite of all our imperfections, He accepts our love, and says, "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey."

Turning again to our precious text, we observe that our Lord's

satisfaction is compared to drinking as well as eating, and that drinking is of a twofold character. "I have drunk My wine." Does He intend, by this, His joy which is fulfilled in us when our joy is full? Does He mean that as men go to feasts to make glad their hearts with wine, so He comes to His people to see their joy, and is filled with exultation? Isn't that what He means? Surely He does. And the milk, may not that mean the Christian's common, ordinary life? As milk contains all the constituents of nourishment, may He not mean by this the general life of the Christian?

Our Lord takes delight in the graces of our lives. One has said that wine may represent those actions resulting from well-considered dedication and deep spiritual thought. For wine must be extracted from the grape with labor and preserved with care--there must be skill, and work, and forethought spent upon it. But milk is a natural production--it flows freely, plentifully, spontaneously. It is a more common and ordinary, yet precious thing. So the Lord delights that His people should give to Him those elaborate works which they have to tend with loving care and watch over with much anxiety before they are produced.

These are the wine. But He would have them give Him the simple outgushing of their souls, the ejaculations which flow forth without labor, the little deeds of love which need no forethought, the everyday outgoings of their inner life-- these are milk, and are equally acceptable to Him. Well, if it is so, certain it is that Christ finds great pleasure is His people, and in their various forms of piety He drinks His wine with His milk.

Permit me now to call your attention to those many great little words, which are yet but one--I refer to the word "My." Observe that eight or nine times it is repeated. Here is the reason for the solace which the

Bridegroom finds in His Church. Does He walk in the Church as men do in a garden for pleasure? Then He says, "I am come into My garden." Does He talk with His Beloved? It is because He calls her, "My Sister, My Spouse." Does He love her prayers and praises? It is because they never would be prayed or praised if He had not created these fruits of the lips.

He says not, "I have gathered your myrrh with your spice." Oh, no! Viewed as ours, these are poor things, but viewed as His they are most acceptable. "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice." So if He finds any honey in His people, any true love in them, He first put it there. "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey." Yes, and if there is any joy and life in them to make His heart glad, He calls it, "My wine," and, "My milk." When I read these words, and thought of our Lord's being fed by us, I could almost have cried out, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You? Or thirsty, and give You drink? Do You find any satisfaction in us? Surely, our goodness extends not to You. Why should we give You anything to eat?"

Yet He declares it. And we may blushingly believe Him, and praise His name--for surely if He found it so--it is because He made it so. If He has gotten anything out of us, He must first have put it in us. If He sees of the travail of His soul, it is because the travail came first.

Note well, you lovers of Jesus, that our Lord in this heavenly verse is fed first. "I have eaten," He says. And then He turns to us, and says, "Eat, O Friends." If any of you seek friendship with the Well-Beloved, you must commence by preparing Him a feast. Remember our Lord's own parable--"Which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk,

and afterward you will eat and drink'?"

Even if your poverty compels you, to say, "As the Lord lives, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse," listen to Him as He answers, "Fear not, make Me thereof a little cake first." Be assured that after you have done so, your barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail. The way for Believers to be fed by

Christ is to seek to feed Him--look to His being satisfied, and He will assuredly look to you. "You shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the same day that you have brought an offering unto your God." (Lev. 23:14).

"Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." See, my Brothers and Sisters--you must find meat for your Lord, and then, but not till then--there shall be meat for you!

In a feast it is remarkable how complete the entertainment is. There is the sweetest food and the most nourishing and exhilarating drink. Then over and above that there is the rarest perfume, not counted to be needed in ordinary entertainments, but crowning all and making up a right royal feast. How marvelous that our Beloved should find within His Church all that His soul wants! Having given Himself to cover her, He delights in her, He rests in His love, and rejoices over her with singing. For the Joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame--and this day He continues to be filled with the same delight.

III. I would gladly linger, but time forbids. We must now remember, in the third place, that the text contains an INVITATION. The Beloved

says, "Eat, O Friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved." In the invitation we see the character of the invited guests--they are spoken of as friends. We were once aliens, we are now more like the Lord from whom the love proceeds. O you that stand shivering in the cold shallows of the river of life, why tarry there? Descend into the greater depths, the warmer waves, and let the mighty stream bathe you breast high. Yes, go farther, plunge where you can find no bottom, for it is blessed and safe swimming in the stream of Christ's everlasting love and He invites you to it now. When you are at a big banquet table, pick not here and there a crumb, sip not now and then a drop--He says, "Eat," and He adds, "drink abundantly." The invitation to receive abundantly applies to both refreshments. Your eating and your drinking may be without stint. You cannot impoverish the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth. When you are satiated with His love, His table shall still be loaded. Your cups may run over, but His flagons will still be brimmed. If you are straitened at all, you are not straitened in Him--you are straitened in yourselves.

But now let me speak to my Brethren, and especially to my fellow workers in the kingdom of Christ. It is for us, just now, while our Lord is walking in His garden--while He is finding satisfaction in His work and in His people--to beware of taking any satisfaction in the work ourselves. And equally to beware that we do not neglect the appropriate duty of the occasion, namely, that of feasting our souls with our Lord's gracious provisions. You are caring for others, it is well. You are rejoicing over others, it is well. Still watch well yourselves, and rejoice in the Lord in your own hearts.

What did He say to the Twelve when they came back glorying that even the devils were subject unto them? Did He not reply, "Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your names are written in

Heaven"? It is your personal interest in Christ, your being yourself saved, Christ being present with you--that is your main joy. Enjoy the feast for yourselves, or you will not be strong to hand out the Living Bread to others. See that you are first partakers of the fruit, or you will not labor aright as God's farmers. The more of personal enjoyment you allow yourself in connection with your Lord, the more strong will you be for His service, and the more out of an experimental sense of His preciousness will you be able to say with true eloquence, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

You will tell others what you have tasted and handled. You will say, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and delivered him from all his fears." I put this before you with much earnestness, and I pray that none of you may think it safe to work as to forget to commune--or wise to seek the good of others so as to miss personal fellowship with the Redeemer. I might now conclude, but it strikes me that there may be some among us who are, in their own apprehensions, outside the garden of Christ's Church. They are, therefore, mourning over this sermon, and saying, "Alas, that is not for me! Christ is come into His garden, but I am a piece of waste ground. He is fed and satisfied in His Church, but He finds nothing in me. Surely I shall perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!"

I know how apt poor hearts are to write bitter things against themselves--even when God has never written a single word against them. So let me see if by turning over this text we may not find thoughts of consolation for the trembling ones. We were once enemies. We are made servants, but we have advanced from the grade of service (though servants,

still) into that of friends. From now on He calls us not servants, but friends, for the servant knows not what his Lord does. And all things

that He has seen of His Father He has made known unto us.

The friendship between Christ and His people is not in name only, but in deed and in truth. Having laid down His life for His friends, having brought them to know His friendship in times of trial and of difficulty, He at all times proves His friendship by telling His secrets to them and exhibiting an intense sympathy with them in all their secret suffering. David and Jonathan were not more closely friends than Christ and the Believer, when the Believer lives near to His Lord. Never seek the friendship of the world, nor allow your love to the creature to overshadow your friendship with Christ.

He next calls His people Beloved as well as friends. He multiplies titles, but all His Words do not express the full love of His heart. "Beloved." Oh, to have this word addressed to us by Christ! It is music! There is no music in the rarest sounds compared with these three syllables which drop from the Redeemer's lips like sweet smelling myrrh. "Beloved!" If He had addressed that one word to any one of us, it would create a Heaven within our souls which neither sickness nor death could mar! Let me sound the note again, "BELOVED!" Does Jesus love me? Does He own His love? Does He seal the fact by declaring it with His own lips?

Then I will not stipulate for promises, nor make demands of Him. If He loves He must act towards me with loving kindness. He will not smite His Beloved unless love dictates the blow. He will not forsake His chosen, for He never changes. Oh, the inexpressible, the heaped-up blessedness which belong to the man who feels in his soul that Christ has called him Beloved!

Here, then, you have the character in the text of those who are invited to commune with Christ. He calls His friends and His Beloved. The provisions presented to them are of two kinds. They are bid to eat and

to drink. You, who are spiritual, know what the food is and what the drink is--for you eat His flesh and drink His blood. The incarnation of the Son of God, and the death of Jesus the Savior--these are the two sacred viands whereon faith is sustained. To feed upon the very Christ of God is what is needed. Nothing but this can satisfy the hunger of the spirit. He who feeds on Him shall know no lack. "Eat," says He, "and drink." You ask, "Where are the provisions?" I answer, they are contained in the first words of the text, "I am come." If He is come, then eat. If He is come, then drink. There is food, there is drink for you in Him!

Note that delightful word, "abundantly." Some dainties satiate, and even nauseate when we have too much of them. But no soul ever had too much of the dear love of Christ. No heart did ever complain that His sweetness was too much. That can never be. Some things, if you have too much of them, may injure you. They are good to a certain point, but beyond that, evil. But even the smallest child of Grace shall never overindulge himself with Jesus' love. No, the more you have, the more you shall enjoy, the more blessed shall you be, and who knows? There may be a soft breath in the text which may fan the smoking flax, a tender hand that may bind up the bruised reed. I will briefly indicate two or three comfortable thoughts.

Seeking Soul, should it not console you to think that Jesus is near? The kingdom of God is come near unto you, for He has come into His garden. He was in our last meeting for anxious souls, for many found Him there. You are not, then, living in a region where Christ is absent--maybe when He passes by He will look on you. Can you not put out your finger and touch the hem of His garment, for Jesus of Nazareth passes by? Even if you have not touched Him, yet it should give you some good cheer to know that He is within reach, and within call.

Though you are like the poor withered lily in the garden, or worse still, like a noxious weed--yet if He is in the garden He may observe you and have pity on you.

Notice, too, that although the text speaks of a garden, it never was a garden till He made it so. Men do not find gardens in the wilderness. In the wilds of Australia or the backwoods of America, men never stumble on a garden where human foot has ever been. It is all forest, or prairie, or mountain. So, mark, Soul, if the Church is a garden, Christ made it so. Why cannot He make you so? Why not, indeed? Has He not said, "Instead of the thorns shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briers shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off"? This garden-making gives God a name. Jesus gets honor by plowing up the wastes, extracting the briers, and planting firs and myrtles there. See, then, there is hope for you yet, you barren Heart--He may yet come and make your wilderness like Eden--and your desert like the garden of the Lord.

Note, too, that the Bridegroom gathered myrrh, and fed on milk and wine, and honey. Yes, and I know you thought, "He will find no honey in me. He will find no milk and wine in me." Ah, but then the text did not say He found

them in the Church. It is said, "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey. I have drunk My wine with My milk." And if He put those things into His Church, and then took comfort in them, why not put them into you, and take comfort in you, too? Be of good cheer! Arise, He calls you this very morning.

Another word, perhaps, may help you. Did you notice, poor hungry Soul, how Jesus said, "drink abundantly"? "Ah," you say, "He did not say that to me." I know it. He said that to His friends and to His Beloved--and

you dare not put yourselves among those. But do not you see how generous He is to His friends, and how He keeps back nothing? He evidently does not mean to lock anything up in the storeroom, for He tells them to eat and drink abundantly. Now, surely, where there is such a festival, though you dare not come and sit at the table with the guests, you might say with the Syrophenician woman, "Yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

It is good knocking at a door where they are keeping open house, and where the feast reveals a lavish hospitality. Knock now, and try it. If it were a poor man's dinner with a dry crust and a poor herring, or if it were a miser's meal spread most begrudgingly, I would not advise you to knock. But where there is wine and milk in rivers, and the good Man of the house bids His guests eat and drink abundantly, I say knock, for God says it shall be opened!

Another thought. Jesus finds meat and drink in His Church, and you are afraid He would find neither in you--I want to tell you a Truth of God which, perhaps, you have forgotten. There was a woman that was a sinner. She had had five husbands, and he with whom she then lived was not her husband. She was an adulteress and a Samaritan. But Christ said, after He had conversed with her, that He had found meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. Where did He get it, then? If He had drank that day, He did not get it from Jacob's well, for He had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep.

He found big refreshment in that poor woman, to whom He said, "Give me to drink." The Samaritan harlot refreshed the soul of Jesus--when she believed in Him and owned Him as the Christ! Have you ever read that Word of His, "My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work"? And what is the will of Him that sent Him? Well, I will tell you what it is not-- "It is not the will of your

Father, that is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." The will of God and the will of Christ are these--to save sinners. For this purpose was Jesus born and sent into the world--He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. See, then, poor lost One, in saving you, Christ will find both meat and drink! I trust, therefore, you will look to Him and cry to Him, and cast yourself upon Him--and you shall never, as long as you live, have any cause for regretting it.

Finally, the text represents the Lord saying, "I am come into My garden." It may imply that He is not always in His garden. Sometimes His Church grieves Him and His manifest Presence departs. But hearken, O Sinner, there is a precious thought for you--He is not always in His garden. But He is always on the Throne of Grace. He does not always say, "I am come into My garden," but He always says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He never leaves the Mercy Seat. He never ceases to intercede for sinners.

Come, and welcome, then. If you have not seen the Beloved's face, come and bow at His feet. Though you have never heard Him say, "Your sins are forgiven you," yet come now with a broken and a contrite heart and seek absolution at His hands. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! May the sweet Bridegroom with cords of love draw you, and may this morning be a time of love. And as He passes by, if He sees you wallowing in your blood, may He say unto you, "Live!" May the Lord grant it, and on His head shall be many crowns. Amen! Amen! Amen!

Chapter 12

Backsliding Healed

(No. 920)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will heal their backsliding." Hosea 14:4.

WHICH rings with the more sonorous voice, the knell, "their backsliding," or the marriage peal, "I will heal"? All through the Scripture records there is revealed a vehement contest between man's sin and God's Grace--each of them striving to become more abundant than the other. Sin, like a dragon, pours forth floods from its mouth, and God's mercy, as a shoreless ocean, rolls in greater majesty. Sin abounds, so that none can measure its heinousness or power. But where sin abounds Grace does much more abound. In the text sin abounds--"their backsliding." There is a comprehensiveness in that word, a dreadful abyss of iniquity. But Grace abounds yet more, "I will heal their backsliding." Here is a height and depth of Grace like the God from whom it came--incomprehensible and infinite!

I shall ask you, this morning, in order that we may get the full measure of benefit which this text may bestow upon us, under the teaching of God's Spirit, first, to notice the words of the text one by one. Secondly, to consider the blessing of the text. And then, thirdly, if we are led of the Holy Spirit, let us not leave this House of Prayer till we have gained the realization of the text.

I. First, then, let us take THE WORDS OF THE TEXT, "I will heal their backsliding." We shall call your attention first, to a word of humiliation, "backsliding." The very sound of it ought to arouse our

spirits. And the consciousness of having fallen into it should make us lay our mouths in their dust, and confess that we are unclean.

Backsliding is among God's people very common. Not common, perhaps, in its highest degree--God forbid it should be--but in its earlier forms. From its commencement in backsliding--of thought, and heart--on to backsliding in act, I fear the disease is so rife among the people of God that there is scarcely one of us who has not at some time or other suffered from it.

And I fear that the most of us might confess, if we judged our own hearts rightly, that in some measure we are backsliding even now. The proper condition for a child of God is walking in the light as Christ is in the light, and so having fellowship with Jesus. Our right condition, and our only safe standing is to abide in Him, and to have His Words and Himself abiding in us. But too often we follow afar off--we are living in very limited and remote fellowship with our Redeemer. These things ought not to be. There is no necessity that they should be, but alas! Alas! Alas! Search the whole Church through, and you shall find them in multitudes, and in some you shall perceive signs of the most sorrowful decay through an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Think, Beloved, each one of you who are Christ's, how much you may have backslidden of late. Have you not become lax in prayer? You maintain the habit of it, and you could not give that up, but you have not that power in prayer you once had. You still read the Word, but maybe the Scripture is not so sweet to you as it was before. You come now to the Communion Table--you have not learned to forsake the assembling of yourselves together there. But oh, the face of the King, in His beauty! Have you seen that as you once did? Perhaps you are still doing a little for His cause, but are you doing what you once did or all you

might do?

Instead of going on unto perfection, is not your growth stunted? Must you not confess that you are not a runner towards Heaven so much as a loiterer in the road there? Do these accusations evoke no confessions? I fear the most of us, if we came to search, would have to say, "I do remember when the love of my espousals was upon me, and my heart was warm with love to Christ. But now, alas! How slow are my passions in moving towards Him! O that I could feel once again the glow of my first love, and that my spirit did rejoice in Him as on the day of my conversion."

I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, if you have to make such acknowledgments, whether you would have believed such things of yourselves when you first came to Christ? If a Prophet had told me that I should be so ungrateful to the dear Lover of my soul, I should have said, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Bought with His precious

blood, and delivered from going down to the pit in those younger days of our attachment, we thought we should evermore closer and closer cleave to our Deliverer. No sacrifice appeared too great, no duty too irksome, if Jesus did but command it.

Yes, we have sorrowfully failed in many respects, and have need to, with deepest sorrow of heart, confess our backsliding and bemoan ourselves before God. But I will not dwell longer upon that word. Such lamentations may end when the heart grows tender. If we see sin sufficiently to make us bewail it, we may then look away from it, for the next word which we shall consider is a word of consolation--"heal." "I will heal their backsliding." There is consolation in the very fact that the Lord, here, looks upon the grievous sin of backsliding under the image of a disease.

It is not said, "I will pardon their backsliding," that is included in the term, but "I will heal" it--as though He said, "My poor people, I do remember that they are but dust. They are liable to a thousand temptations through the Fall, and they soon go astray. But I will not treat them as though they were rebels, I will look upon them as patients--and they shall look upon Me as a physician." Why there is consolation in the very fact that God should condescend, for Jesus' sake, thus to look upon our loathsome, abominable, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sin as being, not so much a condemning iniquity in His sight, but as a disease upon which He looks, pitying us that we should endure the power of it.

And then observe--having looked at backsliding as a disease, He does not say, "I will put this diseased one away." Under the legal dispensation he who had leprosy, or any contagious disease, must be put without the camp, but it is not here said, "I will banish them for their backsliding." O my dear Friends, if we had been put out of God's Church, if we had never been suffered again to come to His Table, we confess we have richly deserved to have it so, but it is not so written here. It is not, "I will put them in quarantine. I will expel them out of the goodly land, and from among My people." No--"I will heal their backsliding."

Nor does He say, "I will destroy them, because of their backsliding." Some will have it that God's people may sin, partially and finally, so as never to be the Lord's Beloved again. They say they can sin themselves out of the Covenant. But we have not so learned Christ, neither have we so understood the Fatherhood of our God--

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves, But loves them to the end."

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," on His part towards His people. "The God of Israel says He hates putting away." No,

it is not, "I will strike their names out of the Book of Life." It is not, "I will disinherit them, seeing they have proved unfaithful to Me," but, "I will heal their backsliding." That is to say, whatever their sin may have been I will overcome it, I will drive it out, I will restore them to their first condition of health. I will do more, I will so heal them that one day without spot or wrinkle or any such thing they shall see their Father's face." A word of consolation!

The next is a word of majesty. It is the first word of the text, "I will heal their backsliding." "I." It is Jehovah Himself who here speaks, the Omnipotent, to whom nothing is difficult. The All-Wise, to whom nothing is secret. He has not promised that their backsliding shall be healed by unknown means, but that He, Himself, will heal it. Suppose He had said, "I will let them alone, and see to what their backsliding will turn. It may be, perhaps, after a period it will work out all its venom, and the wound will be cured." No, my Brethren, had we been left to ourselves, our wounds have become corrupt, and our spirit would have utterly perished. We have gone astray like lost sheep, and one of the ways in which lost sheep go astray is this--they never think of returning. The shepherd must seek them, or else they will wander further and further from home.

Note well that the Lord does not say in the text, "My Word shall heal their backsliding," or, "I will send My minister to heal their backsliding." He does graciously use His Word--it is His ordained means of blessing His people--and He condescendingly employs His ministers, unworthy though they are, to do much service for His children. But after all, it is neither the Word nor the minister that can do anything--only when the Lord puts His hand to the work is it done effectually. "I will heal their backsliding."

Just as Jesus, Himself, going among the sick folk scattered healing

here and there, and made yonder lame man leap as a hart, and yonder dumb tongue to sing, opened blind eyes, drove out fevers and chased away devils--even so it is Your touch, Immanuel--it is Your Presence, You Savior of sinners, that does heal us of all our sins. He Himself took our sicknesses, and therefore He knows how to deliver us from them. Is not His name Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that heals you?

And has He not said, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell there shall be forgiven their iniquity"?

It is Jehovah that says it! Then rest assured the work will be done. Has He said, and shall He not do it? It is Jehovah that says it! However desperate our soul is in sickness, it shall be recovered. For is anything too hard for the Lord? "I will heal their backsliding." Blessed be His name! When you and I feel our backsliding, if it had been said that the backsliding should be healed by any ordinary means, we should have replied, "Not mine. No, Lord, mine is a case beyond all others, hopeless, helpless, incurable." But when it is said, "I will heal," how it takes away all power to be unbelieving, for what cannot the Lord do?

What diseases cannot He chase away? He can speak even to the dead and make them live! Therefore let us have hope in Him, for however far we may have gone, and however broken our heart may be concerning it, He can bind up all our wounds and make each broken bone to sing--and this shall be the song--"Lord, who is like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and remembering not the backslidings of your people?" Thus we have had three out of the five words of the text--one for our humiliation. The second for our consolation. And the third for our adoration, since it reveals the majesty of God.

Another word is in the text, which I shall venture to lift up out of the background in which it dwells ordinarily, "I will heal their

backsliding." Here is a word of certainty. "I will"--"I will heal their backsliding." But why will He heal? Why does He say so positively that He "will"? Here is no perhaps. No perhaps. The men in Nineveh went to God with nothing to encourage them, but, "who can tell?" But the children of God come to Him with "shalls" and "wills" to plead. I pray you, Backslider, if you desire to return to the Lord this morning, observe the certainty of the text, and plead it. God who says "I will," is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.

If He says, "I will," you can say, "Lord, fulfill this word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." But why will God heal His people? He will because He has assumed the office of physician, and for a physician to fail in his attempts reflects upon him no honor. Every patient that the physician loses is so much loss to the fame of his skill. "I will heal their backsliding," says God. "I have undertaken to save them, and I will go through with it. I have made with them in Christ a Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and I will not suffer one of these, My little ones, to perish, and I will heal their backsliding."

Are they not His children? Now, if a physician failed to exercise his skill on a stranger, yet surely he will not upon his own child! There is nothing in the whole compass of pharmacy that the child should not have. There is nothing in all the art of surgery which the surgeon would not exercise upon his own beloved child if he has need of it. Of ALL His children the Divine Father says, "I will heal their backsliding."

Beloved, we have cost our God too dear for Him to suffer us to perish, and perish we must without healing-- therefore He will heal us. On every child of God the Father sees the marks of the Redeemer's blood.

Every heir of Heaven carries about with him mementoes that touch the Father's soul, for He remembers well the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the groans and cries of the Well-Beloved. You who believe in Jesus cost too much--He cannot let you die. The Lord has loved you too long to let you perish, for before the foundation of the world His heart went out towards His chosen. From of old His delights were with the sons of men.

Before you were fashioned and curiously worked in the lower parts of the earth, you lived in the heart of God, and lay upon the bosom of your Redeemer with Whom, even then, you were accounted as one in the Covenant of Grace. "I will heal their backsliding." No disease shall slay them, no sin shall fester in them so as to destroy them. I, Jehovah, who have chosen them, who have redeemed them and called them by My Grace, I will heal them." Heaven and earth may pass away, but this Word shall not pass away. Oh, the blessed certainty of the Divine Word!

There is yet a fifth word in the text, and that is a word of personality. "I will heal their backsliding." That is to say, the backsliding, first, of all His Israel. He is speaking of Israel. "I will heal their backsliding"--His own peculiar peo-ple--His own elect ones. He Himself shall and will heal them. He will not suffer one of them to become sick with sin that it shall be fatal to them. That we may know whether we share in this promise we may judge from other words which precede the text. Those of whom He spoke were willing to come to Him and say, "Take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, and love us freely."

If there is any man here who desires to be forgiven for Christ's name's sake because of the Free Grace of God. If there is any here bemoaning his iniquity and desirous to return unto his God. If there is any soul

who now sincerely closes in with God's way of salvation, and would gladly find deliverance from every sin--such a man may be assured that he is one of those of whom God has said, "I will heal their backsliding."

Do you hate your backsliding? Do you, like David, cry, "against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge"? Do your sins pain you? Have they become a very plague to your heart? Oh, then He will heal your backslidings! Are you earnest in prayer? Do you cry out that He would have pity upon you? Can you weep the penitential tear? Has He looked on you as He looked on Peter, and can you go out and weep bitterly, if not with actual drops that distil externally from the eyes, yet with inward drops that fall within from the still of the heart?

If so, He that breaks hearts always means to heal them. He never yet gave a wounded and a contrite spirit but what He was sure, before long to bring to it a better balm than Gilead ever knew, and to let the blood of Jesus speak better things than that of Abel, even peace eternally within that wounded spirit. "Their backsliding"--take the word and turn it to the singular and make it in the first person--say, "Lord, heal my backslidings! Heal those I know not of, 'cleanse You me from secret faults.' I do know some of them, and I mourn them. Deliver Your servant as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." So you see the text has a meaning in every one of its words. I have drawn already five lessons from the five words which it contains.

II. But we pass on to try and bring out more clearly THE BLESSING OF THE TEXT. "I will heal their backsliding." That blessing must be measured, first, by the evil from which it delivers "backsliding."

Backsliding is treated as a disease. Let us speak awhile upon that fact. Let us say, concerning backsliding, that it is one of the most dangerous things into which a child of God can fall. It endangers all present joy. It greatly injures usefulness. And it imperils the future.

No professing Christian falls into the great open sin all at once--much backsliding has gone before.

See the tree blown down by the strong winds. Nine times out of ten, if you look carefully at it, you will see that insects have been at work at it years before, and rotted it. And, therefore, when at last the trial came, it only consummated what had long been going on. When, some years ago, many of our greatest commercial houses suddenly collapsed, and bankruptcies were so terribly frequent, you do not imagine that they lost their money all in a day! In the investigation of their accounts it was proved in many cases that ten, or even twenty years before, the firms began to go back in the world.

Little by little, as a rule, backsliding leads on to overt apostasy and sin. No, no--so mature a servant of the devil as Judas is not produced all at once. It takes time to educate a man for the scorner's seat.

Take care, therefore, of backsliding because of what it leads to. If you begin to slip on the side of a mountain of ice, the first slip may not hurt if you can stop and slide no further. But, alas, you cannot so regulate sin! When your feet begin to slide, the rate of their descent increases, and the difficulty of arresting this motion is incessantly becoming greater. It is dangerous to backslide in any degree--for we know not to what it may lead.

It is a defiling thing to backslide, for a man cannot lose the intensity of his love to Christ and holiness without becoming thereby worldly and impure in heart. You cannot be less in prayer without being less like God. Sin is quite certain to seek a dwelling for himself in

any heart where the Spirit of God is not actually present. Let your God withdraw His manifest fellowship, and sin is sure to come in to fill up the vacuum. Backsliding mars the whiteness of the righteousness of saints and blots their beauty. And as it is defiling, so is it contagious. One Believer cannot be living a life of little Grace without weakening those Believers who come into contact with him.

I know some holy men (I wish to be more like they) who are a blessing to all with whom they converse. Wherever they are, like an Oriental perfume, they spread a fragrance all around. Their lives are like the star in the east which led men to Christ. Their graciousness reminds us of the blessing of Asher, whose promise was that he should dip his foot in oil--for wherever they go they leave the tokens of the unction of the Holy One behind them. But the dark side to this picture is the fact that if we decline in Grace, our backsliding has a down-dragging tendency on others. The whole army is impeded by the lagging of a single regiment.

The old naturalists used to speak of a creature they called a remora, which they believed could fasten with its suckers upon a sailing vessel and hinder its progress. Backsliding Christians are just such remoras to the good ship of the Church, they are barnacles upon her, and impede her voyage--

"One sickly sheep infects the flock, And weakens all the rest."

When there is a parliamentary train crawling along in front, even the limited express mail is hindered. When one professor acts in a worldly, careless, indifferent, or covetous spirit, he encourages others to do the same--and the example soon multiplies itself.

I wish I could make you see what a backslider is. I am afraid I cannot, but a simple illustration may help you. Do you remember that fine, athletic young man who was for years among us, and was almost envied

for his robust health and remarkable vigor? Exertion was to him a pleasure. He rejoiced as a strong man to run a race. Strong as an oak, upright as a palm tree, and comely as a cedar--you had but to see him to admire him. Alas, we miss him from his usual seat, and his place of daily service knows him no more. He cannot mix in our assemblies, and never will again. He rises very late in the day, and the slightest motion is labor to him. He has a horrible deep-seated cough, and he is reduced to a skeleton.

His cheeks are sunken. There is a peculiar brightness of the eyes, but, with the exception of that, there is nothing about him that reminds you of what he was. And, if you should take a stranger to see him, you would say, "You cannot imagine what that young man used to be." His mother weeps to think that this is her son, once the image of manly power. It pains her inmost heart to know that this is certainly her boy, her once strong and healthy boy. Yet he is not dead--no, but it is grievous to see how near death he has come, and with what difficulty he breathes. How weak are his lips, how languid is his pulse, how small his appetite!

The strong man is now weaker than a little child. In fact, man as he is, his father has to take him in his arms and carry him up and down stairs, for he cannot otherwise come out of his chamber. Here is a sadly truthful picture of what a Christian may become in spirit. He may suffer spiritual consumption, and decline from weakness to weakness till life barely retains its hold. He shall not die--for his life is bid with Christ in God. But he may gradually backslide until he is weak as water, and full of doubts and fears, and a thousand ills. The backslider has no strength for service. He renders nothing to the Church, but rather requires other Christians to watch, and help, and tend him.

He wants comforts and cordials, but from them all he has little or no enjoyment--he lives, blessed be God, he lives--but it is a struggling, unhappy, meager life. His religion gives him little rapture and very much anxiety. Few are the promises that he feeds upon, and many are the threats that haunt him. He will be saved, yet so as by fire. God forbid that you or I should run the frightful risks that backsliders run who thus walk wide of Jesus Christ and dwell far below the elevated region where spiritual health is sustained. May our souls prosper and be in health. And may we follow the Lord fully and evermore abide in Him.

What a mercy it is that, while we have to give such a distressing description of what backsliding leads to, we can turn to the text and find it written, "I will heal their backsliding"! Consumption, when it once comes to be really consumption, is, beyond all doubt, utterly incurable by ordinary medicine. And, though many remedies may assist the sufferer and prolong life, yet, as a rule, consumption is the herald of death. And so backsliding is quite incurable by any human means, and would be the forerunner of total apostasy were it not for Divine Grace. When a man's heart begins to fall from God--like a stone falling from a tower, it descends at an ever-increasing ratio--and none can call it back again to the place from which it fell. Or stop it in midair, except that Divine Hand which can suspend the laws of gravity, arrest the course of sin, and restore the falling one to his place.

"I will heal their backslidings." I understand, then, the glory of this blessing to lie in this--that though backsliding is of all things most dangerous, most defiling and injurious, and in itself most deadly--yet falling into it, you need not despair. On the contrary, if we have fallen into it, listen hopefully to the Voice which says, "Return, O backsliding children," backed up as it is by the promise, "I will heal their backsliding."

That we may see this blessing in a still clearer light, let us notice the healing itself. What is the healing of backsliding? It may be said to lie in two things, namely, forgiveness of its sin, and release from its power. That eminent man of God, Bishop Reynolds, who has written upon the last two chapters of Hosea, says there is a fourfold healing of backsliding, and I think he is correct. First, as we have said, backsliding is healed when all the sin of it is forgiven. Dwell on that a minute. You have been a backslider. Perhaps you are so now, but God, even the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, can purge you with hyssop, and you shall be clean!

Your leprosy shall depart and your flesh shall become fresh as a little child. "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins." Oh, the blessedness of this! If sin returns upon you, child of God, that Fountain filled with blood, which washed you once, has by no means lost its power. You may wash again, Backslider.

The Mercy Seat is not removed, nor is the permission to approach it revoked. My heart delights to think I may go to Jesus as a sinner, if I cannot as a saint. I want a Savior now as much as ever I did. I want new pardon for new sin. I thank the Master for having taught us to say every day, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Even those who can say, "Our Father which are in Heaven," with a full assurance begotten in them by the filial spirit of Divine Grace, yet have need to ask that sin may be forgiven. We want daily pardon, and we shall have it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The next fact of healing is the removal of all the injurious effects which sin has caused. A man does not backslide without feeling a tendency to go further into sin--contamination is sure to ensue. Backsliding deprives a Christian of many of his privileges. It hides the face of Christ. It darkens the Sun of Righteousness, or rather blinds our eyes to His brightness. It robs us of all present joys. It grieves the Holy Spirit and causes Him to withdraw from us in a measure. Now when it is said, "I will heal their backsliding," it means this--"I will take away from them all the pollution which their sin has caused, all the injury which their sin has done to their moral and spiritual nature. I will give back to them all that they lost by giving way to evil."

But, "I will heal their backsliding" means thirdly, "I will take away those judgments which I have sent upon them in consequence of their backsliding." The Ephraimites were subject to invasions by cruel tyrants because they had revolted from the Lord, but as soon as they repented, God took away the oppressors and so healed their wounds. Now you, perhaps, dear Brother and Sister, have been a long while under the rod, and you have said, "Lord, when will You comfort me?" Perhaps His answer is, "I will comfort you when you have fully confessed your wanderings, and forsaken your idols." Hear that rod and Him that has appointed it. Many a child of God suffers long series of losses and crosses, the cause of which will be found in the fact that he has not fully turned to the hand that smote him.

The Lord will bring His people back. And if one blow does not do it, they shall have another. And if that is not enough, they shall be smitten with many stripes till at last, with weeping and lamentations, they shall return unto the Lord their God. You know not how many

temporal griefs would vanish away like smoke before the wind if your heart were but more humble before the Most High. "I will heal their backsliding," that is, "I will take away the temporal chastisement with which I have visited them."

Then, again, the fourth kind of healing is the restoration of lost comfort. Instead of the despondency which the Believer feels, when, day and night the hand of God is heavy upon him, he shall yet rejoice in the Lord. God's children always have to smart for sin. If they were ungodly they might sin and enjoy the sweet of their stolen waters. But if they are in very deed the Lord's own people, smart must follow sin. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Hear how David cries out, how hoarse his voice is in that fifty-first Psalm, and all through those seven Penitential Psalms how he dips every verse in the brine of his repentance! He did not find it a profitable or a harmless thing to commit unrighteousness. And so, Brethren, you and I, if we are God's children, will be sure to find that backsliding is a root that bears gall and wormwood. Yet, after his mournful confession and deep soul travail, David received the consolation of God, and his tongue sang aloud of God's righteousness.

He said, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation." And God did restore it, and the bones which had been broken were made to rejoice. This is conclusive healing of our backsliding--when we receive beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. Do not believe, O penitent wanderers, that His mercy is gone forever. He is ever mindful of His Covenant, and He will restore your souls, and lead you in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. My Brothers and Sisters, if the sin is once drowned, your sorrow shall be assuaged. If you remove the cause, the effect shall follow. Did you once leap like David before the

ark, or like Miriam dance to the timbrel of triumph? And have your knees grown stiff, and do your hands hang down through sin?

May the Lord help you to break off your sin by righteousness, and the weak hands shall be strengthened, and the feeble knees shall be confirmed. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing--for the Lord will again say unto your soul, "I am your salvation." Your Sun may seem to have gone down, but unto you that fear the Lord He shall arise with healing beneath His wings. Only return unto the Lord, and He will restore to you "the years which the locust has eaten," for He has said it, and He will make it good in its fullest extent--"I will heal their backsliding."

Now, Brethren, consider the mode in which this backsliding is healed, for that is part of the mercy. It very frequently happens that by Divine Grace the healing of backsliding is brought about in God's Providence by severe afflictions. The previous chapters to this one all go to show how God can act as a lion or a leopard, or as a bear robbed of her whelps, when His people wander into sin. But I shall not dwell on that point, only I would say that the severest trial that ever happens to you, if it brings you to your God, is a surpassing blessing. I would not, and I dare not, pray that the Lord would keep me from all future affliction and pain.

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted." "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word." This is true of all Believers. The Cross is our best earthly heritage. Whenever we imagine that we have won the crown we should remember that it would be an unseasonable mercy, for this is not a palace, but a battlefield. But when we feel the Cross it is a seasonable blessing, suitable for followers of the Crucified. "In the world you shall have tribulation."

The connection of the text leads me to remark that our heavenly Father

in Christ Jesus heals our backslidings, as a usual rule, by presenting to our minds a fresh sense of His great love. The next sentence seems to say that, "I will love them freely." I never find that my heart is so moved to return unto her rest as when she feels that the Lord has dealt bountifully with her. When I remember that I am still His child, my soul cries, "I will seek again my Father's love." If I believed the doctrine of the final falling of the saints, I fear I should feel no motive urging me to return unto my Lord. I fear I should feel the hardening effect of slavish fear, and like Hagar, flee into the wilderness.

If the prodigal son had once suspected that he was disinherited and was no more a child, he would have given up all thoughts of return. And though he confessed that he was not worthy to be called a son, yet he knew he was a son, and so back he came, and his father received him. We are willing to confess that to cast us away would be just, as we are considered in ourselves. But the fact that He has not cast away His people whom He did foreknow draws us with invisible but invincible bonds back to our Lord.

Yes, oftentimes the child of God, when he is cold in heart, has been revived and refreshed by some such thoughts as these--"He is still faithful to me, though I am faithless to Him. Jesus bought me with His blood, and He will not lose me. In His Heaven I shall dwell, notwithstanding all this unworthiness of mine. O my Heart, how can you be so like an iceberg to Him when He has loved you despite your innumerable faults? How can you give your eternal Benefactor so base a return?"

The great furnace of Christ's love sends out sparks which fall into our hearts, and then they also begin to glow--

"Depth of mercy, can there be

Mercy yet reserved for me?

Can my God His wrath forbear?

Me, the chief of sinners spare?" Does He bid me return to Him, and does He say, "I am married unto you?" "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?" Oh, then, while God's heart of mercy is moved, our repentings are kindled, our soul melts while our Beloved speaks! Our stony heart is like the rock which gushed with water. The mountains flow down at His Presence! As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil.

We feel revenge against sin, and sacred jealousy is aroused. Then we return unto our first Husband, and our first love! With weeping and with supplications we return, and with desire we desire Him in the night--

"Love, mighty love, our soul subdues; We fly into our Savior's arms;

Her former vow our heart renews, Ravished afresh with mercy's charms.

Love is the cord that draws us home, The bond which holds our spirit fast;

Forbids us over again to roam, And captivates us to the last."

It sometimes happens that the healing of our backsliding is as sudden as it is gracious. When we awoke this morning we were all startled to find how suddenly the ground had been covered with snow. I should not wonder when we leave this place if we shall be almost as much startled to find how soon the snow has disappeared under the rapid thaw.

The Lord who casts forth His ice like morsels can cause His wind to blow so that the waters flow. Have you ever found it so in the little world within? Your heart has been dull and dead, and by a word Jesus has quickened you! "Or ever you were aware, your soul made you like the chariots of Amminadib." Blessed be God, His cures can be worked in a

moment! He can raise His children from their graves of backsliding and redeem them from death. Pray that so glorious a work may be worked in you, my dear Brother or Sister. Let me pause awhile to give you space to breathe the prayer--

"Come, Lord, on wings of flaming love,
My spirit to upraise;
Fly like the lightning from above,
And fill my soul with praise."

Even if restoration from backsliding be gradual, Brethren, as sometimes it is--and attended with much mourning and much sorrow--yet is the blessing still so choice that no words of mine can ever express its value. And so I leave it with your hearts to do what my lips cannot.

III. The third point was to be THE REALIZATION OF THE BLESSING of the text, but our time is gone. Therefore let me hope that you have already obtained it, or will not rest till you have.

If you would be savingly and thoroughly revived from backsliding, earnestly desire it. "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." Set your face towards God. Resolve upon obtaining renewal by His Grace. Then next make a confession of your fault. "You have fallen by your iniquity." Acknowledge your grievous fault and be humbled for it. It is a mark that God is recovering a soul when it is deeply, penitentially, humbled. I have noticed that whenever any who have been excommunicated from this Church have been restored, in every case they have walked in lowliness, and won all our hearts by their contrition and little esteem of themselves.

Whenever those who have grievously transgressed apply to be received again, and at the same time complain of the sentence of the Church, and of the conduct of the members, I feel that I dare not advise my Brethren to loose them from the sentence. For if they were really

penitent, they would find no fault with others, but with many tears would lament their own shortcomings. It is one mark of Grace when the backslider puts his finger on his mouth as to the fault of his Brethren, feeling, "It is not for me to say a word against any, I am so involved in fault myself, that I dare not throw a stone."

If you would have your backsliding healed, be much in prayer. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Backsliding begins in forsaking prayer, and recovery will begin in renewing supplication. If you would be recovered, cast away your false confidence. " Ashur shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses." Turn Mr. Carnal Security out of doors--he is your enemy and God's enemy--be rid of him! Renounce your idols--"We will not say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods." You cannot recover from backsliding while you love any child or friend inordinately, or while anything stands in your heart before Christ. You will never be right while your money holds an undue position in your minds, or while your position in society is more precious to you than Christ. Away with your idols, or they will cry, "Away with Christ." Either give them up, or give up hope.

Lastly, return again by simple faith to God in Christ, remembering that in Him the fatherless find mercy. If you are like an orphan, having none to help or to provide for you, and feel your spiritual destitution, then, in confidence in the abounding Grace of God, return to Him and live. O Brethren, let us all seek to get nearer to Christ! Let us all take the eagle's motto, "Higher, higher, higher." Soar yet beyond. Let us seek to attain what we have not as yet known. And as for the things which remain, let us hold them fast that no man take our crown. "What we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

Let us not decline from our first love, but rather, "not as though we

had already attained, either were already perfect," let us forget the things which are behind, and press forward to that which is before, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. The Lord bless His Church richly, and send His dew upon Israel. And make us all to grow in Divine Grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For His name's sake we ask and expect it. Amen.

Chapter 13

Nathanael And The Fig Tree

(No. 921)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the Prophets, wrote; Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no deceit!' Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip calledyou, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'Nathanael answered and said to Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these.' And He said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." John 1:45-51.

VERY often we address the Gospel to the chief of sinners. We believe it to be our duty to do this with the greatest frequency. For did not our Lord, when bidding His disciples to preach the Good News in every place, use the words, "beginning at Jerusalem"? Where the chief of sinners lived, there was the Gospel first to be preached. But at the same time it would show great lack of observation if we regarded all mankind as being equally gross, open offenders against God. It would not only show a want of wisdom, but it would involve a want of

truthfulness.

For though all have sinned, and deserve the wrath of God, yet all unconverted men are not precisely in the same condition of mind in reference to the Gospel. In the parable of the sower we are taught that before the good seed fell upon the field at all, there was a difference in the various soils. Some of it was stony ground, another part was thorny, a third was trodden hard like a highway, while another plot is described by our Lord as "honest and good ground." Although in every case the carnal mind is enmity against God, yet are there influences at work which in many cases have mitigated, if not subdued, that enmity. While many took up stones to kill our Lord, there were others who heard Him gladly. While to this day thousands reject the Gospel, there are others who receive the Word with joy. These differences we ascribe to God's prevenient Grace. We believe, however, that the subject of these differences is not aware that Grace is at work upon him--neither is it precisely Grace in the same form as saving Grace--for the soul under its power has not yet learned its own need of Christ, or the excellency of His salvation.

There is such a thing as a preparatory work of mercy on the soul, making it ready for the yet higher work of Grace, even as the plowing comes before the sowing. We read in the narrative of the creation that before the Divine voice said, "Let there be light," darkness was upon the face of the deep, yet it is added, "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Even so in the darkness of human nature, whereas yet no ray of living light has shone, the Spirit of God may be moving with secret energy, making the soul ready for the hour when the true light shall shine.

I believe that in our congregations there are many persons who have been mercifully restrained from the grosser vices. They exhibit

everything that is pure and excellent in moral character--they are persons who are not maliciously opposed to the Gospel and are ready enough to receive it if they did but understand it. They are even anxious to be saved by Jesus Christ, and have a reverence for His name, though as yet it is an ignorant reverence. They know so little of the Redeemer that they are not able to find rest in Him. This slenderness of knowledge is the only thing that holds them back from faith in Him. They are willing enough to obey if they understood the command. If they had but a clear apprehension of our Lord's Person and work, they would cheerfully accept Him as their Lord and Savior. I have great hopes that the Lord of Love

may guide the Word which is now to be spoken so that it may find out such persons, and may make manifest the Lord's secretly chosen ones--those prisoners of hope who pine for liberty--but know not that the Son can make them free.

O captive Soul, abhorring the chains of sin, your day of liberty is come! The Lord, the Liberator who looses the prisoners, is come at this very hour to snap your bonds!

I. In dwelling on this narrative, I shall first say a few words concerning NATHANAEL HIMSELF. We are told that he was a guileless man, "an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile." That is to say, like Jacob, "he was a plain man," and not like Esau, "a cunning hunter." Some minds are naturally serpentine, tortuous, slippery. They cannot think except in curves--their motives are involved and intricate, and they are of a double heart. These are the men who look one way and row the other. They worship the god Janus with two faces, and are of the same practice, if not of the same persuasion as the Jesuits. They cannot speak a thing plainly or look you in the face while they talk, for they are full of mental reservations and prudential cautions. They

guard their speech. They dare not send abroad their own thoughts till they have mailed them up to the throat with double meanings.

Nathanael was just the very opposite of all this. He was no hypocrite and no crafty deceiver. He wore his heart upon his sleeve. If he spoke, you might know that he said what he meant and that he meant what he said. He was a childlike, simple-hearted man, transparent as glass. He was not one of those fools who believe everything. But on the other hand, he was not of that other sort of fools so much admired in these days who will believe nothing, but who find it necessary to doubt the most self-evident Truth in order to maintain their credit for profound philosophy. These "thinkers" of this enlightened age are great at quibbles, mighty in feigning or feeling mistrust concerning matters which common sense has no doubts about.

They will profess to doubt whether there is a God, though that is as plain as the sun at noonday. No, Nathanael was neither credulous nor mistrustful. He was honestly ready to yield to the force of Truth. He was willing to receive testimony and to be swayed by evidence. He was not suspicious, because he was not a man who, himself, would be suspected. He was true-hearted and straightforward--a plain dealer and plain speaker. Cana had not within her gates a more thoroughly honest man. Philip seems to have known this, for he went to him directly, as to a man who was likely to be convinced and worth winning to the good cause.

In addition to being thus a simple-hearted man, Nathanael was an earnest seeker. Philip went to him because he felt that the good news would interest him. "We have found the Messiah," would be no gladsome news to anyone who had not looked for the Messiah. Nathanael had been expecting the Christ, and perhaps had so well understood Moses and the Prophets that he had been led to look for His speedy coming. The time

when Messiah would suddenly come in His temple had certainly arrived, and he was day and night with prayer, like all the faithful of the ten tribes, watching and waiting for the appearing of their salvation. He had not as yet heard that the Glory of Israel had, indeed, come, but he was on the very edge of expectation.

What a hopeful state of heart is yours, my dear Hearer, if you are now honestly desirous to know the Truth, and intensely anxious to be saved by it! It is well, indeed, for you if your soul is ready, like the photographer's sensitive plate, to receive the impression of the Divine Light--if you are anxiously desiring to be informed if there is, indeed, a Savior--if there is a Gospel, if there is hope for you, if there is such a thing as purity and a way to reach it. It is well, I say, if you are anxiously and earnestly desiring to know how and when, and where--and determinately resolved, by God's Grace, that no exertion shall be spared on your part to run in the way that shall be marked out, and to submit yourself unto the will of God. This was the state of Nathanael, an honest-hearted lover of plain truth, seeking to find the Christ.

It is also true that he was ignorant up to a certain point. He was not ignorant of Moses and the Prophets, these he had well considered. But he knew not that Christ as yet had come. There was some little distance between Nazareth and Cana, and the news of the Messiah's coming had not traveled there. If it had been bad news, it would have flown on eagles' wings, but being good news its flight was slower, for few persons are so anxious to tell out the good as the evil. He had not, therefore, heard of Jesus of Nazareth till Philip came to him. And how many there are even in this country who do not know yet what the Gospel means, but are anxious to know it, and if they did but know it would receive it?

"What?" you say, "where there are so many places of worship and so many

ministers?" Yes, just that. Yes, and in the very heart of our congregations and in the midst of our godly families, ignorance has its strongholds. These uninstructed ones may be Bible readers, they may be Gospel hearers, but as yet they may not have been able to grasp the great Truth
that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. They may never have seen what it is for Christ to stand in the sinner's place, and for that sinner, by an act of trust, to obtain the blessings which spring out of a substitutionary sacrifice. Yes, and here in this house where I have tried and labored to put the Gospel in short Saxon words and sentences that cannot be misunderstood, there may be some who are still saying, "What is this all about? I hear much of believing, but what is it? Who is this Christ, the Son of God, and what is it to be saved from sin, to be regenerated, to be sanctified? What are all these things?"

Well, dear Friend, I am sorry you should be in the dark, yet am I glad at heart, that though you do not know what I would have you know, yet you are simple-hearted, truth-loving, and sincere in your seeking. I am persuaded that light will not be denied you, you shall yet know Jesus and be known of Him.

In addition to this, however, Nathanael was prejudiced--we must modify that expression--he was somewhat prejudiced. As soon as Philip told him that he had found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Here let us remark that his prejudice is exceedingly excusable, for it arose out of the faulty testimony of Philip. Philip was a young convert. He had only found Jesus the day before, and the natural instinct of every truly gracious soul is to try and tell out the blessed things of Christ. So away went Philip to tell his friend, Nathanael. But what a many blunders he made

in the telling out of the Gospel! I bless God, blundering as it was, it was enough to bring Nathanael to Christ.

But it was full of mistakes. Dear Souls, if you know only a little about Christ, and if you would make a great many mistakes in telling out that little, yet do not hold it in--God will overlook the errors and bless the Truth. Now observe what Philip said. He said, "We have found Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," which was our Lord's popular name, but was in no way correct. He was not Jesus of Nazareth at all. He was not a native of Nazareth--our Lord was of Bethlehem. He had dwelt at Nazareth, certainly, but He was no more entitled to be called of Nazareth than of Jerusalem.

Then Philip said, "Son of Joseph," but He was only the reputed son of Joseph, He was in truth, the Son of the Highest. Philip gave to our Lord the common and erroneous titles which the unthinking many passed from hand to hand. He did not say, "We have found the Son of God," or "the Son of David," but yet he uttered all he knew--and that is all God expects of you or me. Oh, what a mercy it is that the imperfections of our ministry do not prevent God's saving souls by us! If it were not so, how little good would be done in the world!

Mr. John Wesley preached most earnestly one view of the Gospel, and William Huntingdon preached quite another view of it. The two men would have had a holy horror of each other and censured each other most conscientiously. Yet no rational man dares say that souls were not saved under John Wesley, or under William Huntingdon either, for God blessed them both. Both ministers were faulty, but both were sincere--and both made useful. So is it with all our testimonies. They are all imperfect, full of exaggerations of one Truth, and misapprehensions of another. But as long as we witness to the true Christ foretold by Moses and the Prophets our mistakes shall be

forgiven, and God will bless our ministry, despite every flaw.

So He did with Nathanael--but Nathanael's prejudice rose out of Philip's blundering way of talking. If Philip had not said, "of Nazareth," then Nathanael would not have said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" If Philip had said that Jesus was of Bethlehem, and of the tribe of Judah, and that God was His Father, then this prejudice would never have beclouded the mind of Nathanael, and it would have been easier for him to have acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. We must, therefore, try to avoid mistakes, lest we cause needless prejudice. We should so state the Gospel that if men are offended by it, it shall be the Gospel which offends them, and not our way of putting it.

It may be that you, my Friend, are a little prejudiced against Christ's holy Gospel because of the imperfect character of a religious acquaintance, or the rough manners of a certain minister. But I trust you will not allow such things to bias you. I hope that, being candid and honest, you will come and see Jesus for yourself. Revise the report of the disciple by a personal inspection of the Master. Philip made up for his faults when he added, "Come and see." And I would try to prevent mine from injuring you by using the same exhortation--

"Come and see Jesus and His Gospel for yourself."

One other mark of Nathanael I would mention. He was in all respects a godly, sincere man, up to the measure of his light. He was not yet a Believer in Jesus, but still he was an Israelite, indeed. He was a man of secret prayer, he did not mock God as the Pharisees did by mere outward worship. He was a worshipper of God in his heart. His soul had private

dealings with the God of Heaven when no eye saw him. So it is, I trust, with you, dear Hearer. You may not yet have found peace, but you do pray, you are desirous of being saved. You do not wish to be a

hypocrite. You dread, above all things, falling into formality. You pray that if ever you become a Christian you may be a Christian, indeed. Such is the character I am endeavoring to find out, and if it is your character, may you get the blessing that Nathanael did.

II. Now secondly, we have seen Nathanael, let us for a moment consider NATHANAEL'S SIGHT OF JESUS. "Philip says unto him, Come and see." And so Nathanael came to see the Savior, which implies that although he was somewhat prejudiced against this new Messiah, yet he was candid enough to investigate His claims. Beloved Friend to whom I have already spoken, if you have any prejudice against the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, whether it is occasioned by your birth and education, or previous profession of some other faith, be honest enough to give the Gospel of Jesus Christ a fair hearing. You may hear it in this House of Prayer. You may read it in these pages. Do not dismiss it until you have thoroughly examined it. All that we would ask of you is now--knowing you to be honest, knowing you to be earnest-- seriously sit down and weigh the Doctrines of Grace as you shall find them in the Scripture. And especially the life of Christ and the blessings which He brings to those who believe in Him.

Look these things over carefully. They will commend themselves to your conscience, for God has already prepared your conscience to judge righteously. And as you judge you will perceive a peculiar beauty and a charm about the Truths of the Gospel which will surely win your heart. Latimer had preached a sermon against the doctrines of the Gospel, and among his hearers there was a holy man who afterwards became a martyr. He thought, as he listened to Latimer, that he perceived something in his tone which showed him to be an honest opponent. Therefore he hoped that if light were brought to him he would be willing to see by it.

He sought him out, obtained an interview with him, and his explanations

entirely won honest Hugh to the Reformed opinions--and you know what a valiant and popular minister of the New Covenant Latimer became. So, my honest Friend, give to the Gospel of salvation by faith in the precious blood of Jesus a fair hearing, and we are not afraid of the result.

Nathanael came to Christ, again, with great activity of heart. As soon as he was told to, "come and see," he did come and see. He did not sit still and say, "Well, if there is any light in this new doctrine, it will come to me." No, he went to it. Do not believe in any teaching which bids men sit down and find peace in the idea that they need not strive to enter in at the strait gate of Truth. No, Brethren, if Grace has ever come to you, it will arouse you from lethargy and lead you to go to Christ. And by His Grace you will be most earnest, with all the activity of your spirit, to search for Him as for hidden treasure. It is a delightful thing to see a soul on the wing.

The majority of our population are, as regards religion, down on the ground and unwilling to rise. They are indifferent to spiritual Truth. You cannot get them to give earnest heed to eternal matters. But once get a mind on the wing with a holy earnestness and solemn thoughtfulness, and we do believe, with God's Grace, that it will, before long, be brought to a saving faith in Christ. "Come and see," said Philip, and come and see Nathanael did. He does not appear to have expected to be converted to Christ by what he saw with his natural eyes--his judgment was formed from a mental view of Him.

It is true he saw the Person of the Messiah, but he did not expect to see in the human form any lineaments that might guide his judgment. He waited until the lips of the Messiah had spoken, and then, when he had seen the Omniscience of that mysterious Person, and how He could read his thoughts and spy out his secret actions, then he believed. Now I fear some of you live in darkness because you are expecting some kind

of physical manifestation. You hope for a vivid dream, or some strange feeling in your flesh, or some very remarkable occurrence in your family. Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe.

But a saving sight of Christ is another matter! Truth must impress your mental faculties, enlighten your understanding, and win your affections. The Presence of Christ on earth is a spiritual one, and you will come to see Him not with these mortal optics just now, but with the eyes of your soul. You will perceive the beauty of His Character, the majesty of His Person, the all-sufficiency of His Atonement. And as you see these things the Holy Spirit will lead you to believe in Him and live. I pray God that such a sight as this may be vouchsafed to every honest seeker who may hear or read these words.

III. A far greater matter now demands our attention--CHRIST'S SIGHT OF NATHANAEL. As soon as Jesus saw the man, He said, "Behold an Israelite, indeed," which shows us that Christ Jesus read Nathanael's heart. I do not suppose that our Lord had ever seen Nathanael with His own human eyes. But yet He understood Nathanael's character-- not because He was a great judge of physiognomy and could perceive at once that He had a simple-hearted man before Him. But because He was Nathanael's Creator, being the searcher of hearts and the trier of the reins, He could read Na-thanael as readily as a man reads a book which is open before his eyes.

He saw at once all that was within the enquirer, and pronounced a verdict upon him that he was free from falsehood. And then to prove to Nathanael still further how clearly He knew all about him, He mentioned a little incident which I cannot explain, nor can you, nor do I suppose anybody could have explained it except Nathanael and Jesus--a special secret known only to them both. He said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." What he was doing

under the fig tree we may guess, but we cannot know to a certainty. Perhaps it would be true of all to believe that the fig tree was to Nathanael what the Hermonites and the hill Mizar had been to David. David says, "I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar." What were those sacred recollections he does not tell us, and although we can form a shrewd guess, David and his God, alone, knew the full mystery. So between Christ and Nathanael there was a common knowledge connected with that fig tree which we cannot hope to discover. And the moment our Lord mentioned that hallowed spot, its remembrances were to Nathanael so secret and so sacred that he felt that the Omniscient One was before him. Here was evidence which he could not doubt for an instant, for one of the most private and special secrets of his life, which he had never whispered into any human ear, had been brought up as by a talismanic sign. A red-letter day in his private diary had been revived by the mention of the fig tree, and He who could touch so hidden a spring in his soul must be the Son of God.

But what was Nathanael doing under the fig tree, according to our best surmise? Well, as devout Easterns are accustomed to have a special place for prayer, this may have been a shadowy fig tree under which Nathanael was accustomed to offer his devotions. And perhaps just before Philip came to him, he may have been engaged in personal and solitary confession of sin. He had looked round the garden and fastened the gate that none might come in--and he had poured into the ear of his God some very tender confession under the fig tree shade. When Christ said to him, "When you were under the fig tree," it brought to his recollection how he poured out his broken and his contrite spirit, and confessed sins unknown to all but God. That confession, it may be, the very look of Christ brought back to his remembrance and the words and

look together seemed to say, "I know your secret burden, and the peace you found in rolling it upon the Lord." He felt, therefore, that Jesus must be Israel's God.

It is very possible that in addition to his confession, he had under the fig tree made a deliberate investigation of his own heart. Good men generally mingle with their confessions self-examination. There it may be that this man who was free from guile had looked into the tendencies of his nature and had been enabled with holy surprise to see the fountains of the great deep of his natural depravity. He may have been taken, like Ezekiel, from chamber to chamber to see the idols in his heart, beholding greater abominations than he suspected to be there--and there humbled before the Lord. Beneath that fig tree he may have cried with Job, "I abhor myself in dust and ashes." This, also, Jesus had seen.

Or under the fig tree he may have been engaged in very earnest prayer. Was that fig tree to Nathanael what Peniel was to Jacob, a spot where he had wrestled till the break of day, pleading with God to fulfill His ancient promise, to send the Promised One who should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people, Israel? Was it so? We think it probable. That fig tree had been to him a Bethel, no other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven.

And what if we should suggest that, perhaps in addition to his prayer, Nathanael had vowed some solemn vow under the fig tree--if the Lord would but appear and give to him some sign and token for good, then he would be the Lord's and spend and be spent for Him? If the Lord would but send the Messiah, he would be among His first followers. If he would but speak to him by an angel or otherwise, he would obey the voice. Jesus now tells him that he shall see angels ascending and descending. And reveals Himself as the Messiah to Whom he had solemnly

pledged himself. It may he so.

Once more, it may be that under that fig tree he had enjoyed the sweetest communion with his God. Beloved Friends, do you not remember well, certain hallowed spots? I have one or two in my own life too sacred to mention. If my memory should forget all the world besides, yet those spots will evermore be green in my memory--the truly holy place where Jesus, my Lord, has met with me and showed me His love. One time it was "the King has brought me into His chambers."

Another time I got me to "the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense." Once He said, "Come, My Beloved, let us go forth into the field. And let us lodge in the villages," and another time He changed the scene and said, "Come with Me from Lebanon, My Spouse. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

Have we not sometimes had special festivals when He has broached the spiced wine of His pomegranate? When our joy has been almost too much for the frail body to endure, for our joyous spirit, like a sharp sword, has well-near cut through its scabbard? Ah, it is sweetly true. He has baptized us in the fire of His love, and we shall forever remember those secret spots, those dear occasions. This, then, was a token, a secret token between Christ and Nathanael, by which the disciple recognized his Divine Friend and future Master and Lord. He had met the Messiah in spirit before, and now he meets Him in very flesh and blood. And by this token does he know Him. In spirit the Lord set His seal upon Nathan-ael's heart, and now, by the sacred signet, the Israelite discerns his King.

Thus we see the Lord had seen Nathanael in his previous engagements, before he became actually a Believer in Jesus. This fact suggests that each of you who have been sincerely seeking to be set right, and to

know the Truth, have been fully perceived in all your seeking and desires by the God of Grace. When you let fall a tear because you could not understand the Word, Jesus saw that tear. When you groaned because you could not get satisfaction of heart, He heard that groan. Never true heart seeks Christ without Christ's being well aware of it. Well may He know of it, for every motion of a trembling heart towards Himself is caused by His own love.

He is drawing you, though you perceive not the hands of a man which encircle you. He is the hidden loadstone by which your heart is moved. I know it is night with you, and you grope like a blind man for the wall. But if your heart says, "O that I could but embrace Him! O that He were mine! If I could but find rest in Him, I would give all that I have." Then be assured that Jesus is close to you--your prayers are in His ear, your tears fall upon His heart. He knows all about your difficulties, all about your doubts and fears, and He sympathizes in the whole--and in due time He will break your snares, and you shall yet, with joy, draw water out of the wells of salvation.

This Truth is full of consolation to all who seek with sincerity, though as yet in the dark. Before the minister's voice spoke to you--when you were under the fig tree, when you were by the bedside, when you were in that inner chamber, when you were down in that saw pit, when you were in the hayloft, when you were walking behind the hedge in the field--Jesus saw you. He knew your desires, He read your longings, He saw you through and through. Even from of old He has known you.

IV. So we have seen Nathanael's sight of Christ, and then Christ's sight of Nathanael. Now the fourth thing is, NA-THANAEL'S FAITH. I must go over much the same ground again under this head. Nathanael's faith--note what it was grounded on. He cheerfully accepted Jesus as

the Messiah, and the ground of his acceptance lay in this--Jesus had mentioned to him a peculiar incident in his life which he was persuaded no one could have known but the Omniscient God. He concluded, therefore, Jesus to be the Omniscient God, and accepted Him at once as his King. This was very frequently the way in which persons were brought to confidence in Christ.

The same thing is recorded in this very Gospel a few chapters further on. The Lord sat down on the well and talked to the Samaritan woman, and there was no kind of impression produced upon her until He said, "You have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband." Then it flashed upon her, "This stranger knows my private history! Then He is something more than He appears to be. He is the Great Prophet." And away she ran with this on her tongue, because it was in her heart, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

The same was the case with Zaccheus. You may think, however, that this mode of conversion was confined to the days of our Lord's flesh, and the age of miracles, but it is not so. The fact is that at this very day the discovery of the thoughts of men's hearts by the Gospel is still a very potent means in the hands of the Holy Spirit of convincing them of the Truth of the Gospel. How often have I heard enquirers say, "It seemed to me, Sir, as if that sermon was meant for me. There were points in it which were so exactly like myself, that I felt sure someone had told the preacher about me. And there were words and sentences so peculiarly descriptive of my private thoughts, that I was sure no one but God knew of them. I perceived that God was in the Gospel speaking to my soul."

Yes, and it always will be so. The is the great revealer of secrets. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus Christ

in the Gospel knows all about your sins, all about your seeking, all about the difficulties which you are meeting with. This ought to convince you that the Gospel is Divine, since its teachings lay bare the heart, and its remedies touch every spiritual disease. The knowledge of human nature displayed in the simplest passage of the Gospel is more profound than the productions of Plato or Socrates. The Gospel, like a silken thread, runs through all the windings and twisting of human nature in its fallen state. O that its voice may come home personally to you! May it, by the Spirit, convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment--and bring you to lay hold on eternal life!

Nathanael's faith, it must be mentioned, was peculiar not only in its ground, but in its clear and comprehensive character. He accepted Jesus at once as the Son of God. He was Divine to him, and he adored Him. He also accepted Him as the King of Israel. He was a royal personage to him, and he tendered Him his homage. May you and I receive Jesus Christ in this way, as a real Man, but yet certainly God--a Man who was despised and rejected, but yet the Man anointed above His Brethren--who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

I admire Nathanael's faith, again, because it was so quick, unreserved, and decisive. "You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Christ was glorified by the decision, the quickness of this faith.

Delay in believing Him dishonors Him. O honest Heart, O sincere Mind, pray that you may as quickly come into the light and liberty of true belief! May the Holy Spirit work in you a ready satisfaction in the atoning sacrifice and Divine Person of the ever blessed Immanuel.

V. This brings us to the last point of consideration. We have shown you Nathanael and his sight of Christ, and Christ's sight of him. And then the faith that Nathanael received. Now notice NATHANAEL'S AFTER-SIGHT.

Some persons want to see all that there is in Christianity before they can believe in Jesus, that is to say, before they will go to the primary school they must clamor for a degree at the university. Many want to know the ninth of Romans before they have read the third of John. They are all for understanding great mysteries before they understand that primary simplicity, "Believe and live."

But those who are wiser and, like Nathanael, are content to believe at first what they are able to perceive, namely, that Christ is the Son of God and the King of Israel, shall go on to learn more. Let us read our Lord's words, "You shall see greater things than these. Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter shall you see Heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." To full grown disciples Jesus promises, "Greater things than these shall you do." To young converts He says, "Greater things than these shall you see." He gives promises in proportion to our ability to receive them. The promise given to Nathanael was a most fitting one. He was all Israelite, indeed--then he shall have Israel's vision. What was the great sight that Israel or Jacob saw? He saw the ladder whereon angels ascended and descended. Precisely this shall Nathanael see. He shall see Jesus Christ as the communication between an opened Heaven and a blessed earth--and he shall see the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!

If you bear the character of Israel, you shall enjoy the privileges of Israel. If you are an Israelite, indeed, you shall have the blessing that made Israel glad. Nathanael had owned Jesus as the Son of God--here he is told that he shall see Him in His glory as the Son of Man. Note that last word of the chapter. It is not so much that Christ humbly called Himself the Son of Man--though that is true--but that to see the glory of Christ as God is a simple thing. To see and understand

the glory of Christ as Man, this is a sight for faith, and probably a sight which, so far as our senses are concerned, is reserved for the day of His coming.

When He shall appear--the very Man that suffered upon Calvary--when He shall appear upon the Great White Throne to judge the quick and the dead, if you believe in Jesus as the Son of God, you shall yet see Him in His glory as Man swaying the universal scepter, and enthroned as King of all the earth. He had called Jesus the King of Israel, if you remember. Now he is to see his Lord as the King of the angels--to see the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. Believe, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as far as you know Him, and you shall know more of Him. Open your eyes but to the candle light of the Law, and you shall soon behold the sunlight of the Gospel. The Lord is very gracious to fulfill the Gospel rule, "To him that has, shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

If you acknowledge the King of Israel, you shall see Him as the Lord of Hosts before whom archangels veil their faces, and to Whom seraphim are servitors. The great sight, I suppose, Nathanael saw as the result of his faith was not the transfiguration, nor the ascension as some suppose, but a spiritual view of Christ in His mediatorial capacity as the great link between earth and Heaven. This is, indeed, a sight transcending all others. We are not divided from the invisible. We are not separated from the infinite. The mortal has communion with the Immortal. The sinner speaks with the Holy One--prayers climb up to Heaven, and benedictions descend by way of the Great Substitute.

Can you see this, O Soul? If so, the sight will make you glad. You are not exiled now, you are only at the foot of the stairs which lead to the upper chamber of your Father's House. Your God is above and bright spirits traverse constantly the open gangway of the Mediator's Person.

Here is joy for all the saints--for this ladder can never be broken--our communion is abiding. No doubt, to Nathanael's view, the promise would be fulfilled as he perceived the Providence of God as ruled by Christ Jesus who orders all things for the good of the Church. Was not this intended in the figure of angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, that is, all agencies, whether living or material, all subject to the Law and the dominion of Christ?

So that all things work together for good to them that love God! Do not go fretting to your homes and say, "Here are new doctrines springing up, and new gods that our fathers knew not, and ministers are slipping aside from the faith, and bad days have fallen upon the Church, and Romanism is coming up, and infidelity with it." All this may be true--but it does not matter one fig--for God has a great end in view. He has a bit for the mouth of leviathan. He can do as He wills with His most powerful enemies. He rides upon the wings of cherubs and rules the storm. The clouds are but the dust of His feet. Never believe that Providence is out of joint. The wheels of this great engine may revolve some this way and some that, but the sure result will be produced, for the great Artist sees the final result to be secure.

God's glory shall arise from it all! Angels descend, but they as much do the will of God as those which ascend. Some events seem disastrous, and even calamitous. But they shall all, in the end, prove to be for the best. For he --

"From seeming evil still educes good,"' And better still, and better still--in infinite progression. Until the crown shall come upon the head of Him who was separated from His Brethren, and all the glory shall roll in waves of mighty song at the foot of His Throne, may you and I continue to see this great sight more and more clearly. Until the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the

archangel, and the voice of God, and once and for all we shall see Heaven and earth blended, may we continue to see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

All this matchless glory will come to us through that little window by which we first saw the Savior. If we will not see Him as our Lord until we can see all the future, we shall perish in darkness. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. But if, with simple and true hearts you have been seeking Jesus, and now come and accept Him as the Lord, the King of Israel--then greater things than these shall be in store for you! Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off.

And the day of His pompous appearing, when Heaven and earth shall hang out their streamers for overflowing joy because the King has come unto His own. And the day the crown is put upon the head of the Son of David--then shall you see it and see it all--for you shall be with Him where He is, that you may behold His glory, the glory which the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world. Come Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

Chapter 14

Sincerity And Duplicity

(No. 922)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 6, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him." 1 John 2:3,4.

THE Epistles of John possess and combine certain qualities which seem, at the first blush, to stand opposite as the poles to one another. Their style of expression is simple, chaste, and unadorned. Short words are used. For the most part words of one syllable--such little homely words as a young child might easily spell. And the sense is so clear and obvious, that the captious critic or the astute reasoner must be puzzled to distort it. Yet there is no lack of dignity in the language, and as for the matter of these Epistles, it is grand and sublime. Where would you turn in the pages of the New Testament, save only to the book of the Revelation, given by the pen of the same writer, for more notable mystery?

The language charms our ears, while the Truth it expresses holds us in awe. There are deep meanings and veiled mysteries here. Albeit the hidden wisdom which baffles finite thought is not couched in strange terms, but declared in such plain speech as trips lightly off the tongue, and yet sinks deeply into the heart. Again, the spirit of John is love, all love. Every line he writes is perfumed with charity. And yet to what close self-examination, to what a severe testing does he put us! How truly may it be said that these Epistles are a touchstone

by which we may discern between the true gold and the counterfeit! Generous but discriminating, glowing with affection but rigid in fidelity, the Apostle mingles caution with caress, and qualifies the most soothing consolations with such stern warnings, that in well-near every sentence he constrains us to deep searching of heart. The text is a case in point. With a wise discrimination he draws a contrast between him who knows that he knows Christ, and him who says that he knows Christ. The one he acknowledges, but the other he brands with that hard word, that ignominious title, "a liar," and sends him away as unworthy of further consideration.

Not only in this case, but all through his Epistles, John continues to unravel the tangled web of hypocrisy. Ah, that deceit should steal such gentle shapes and seem like Truth! To show the diverging point between facts and sayings, between realities and professions, between those who have, and those who only say that they have, was his constant aim. It may interest you just to open your Bibles and turn to one or two of the passages that illustrate this. In his first chapter, at the sixth verse, he has been speaking of those who walk in the light and have fellowship with God, and he adds, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

Then in the text he speaks of those who know Christ, and he adds, "He that says, I know Him, and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him." And further on, in the ninth verse, speaking of those who have the light, he says, "He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now." Not to multiply the instances, there is a notable one in the fourth chapter, at the twentieth verse, "If a man says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God Whom he has not seen?"

So to have a thing, or to boast that you have it--to be, or to pretend to be such-and-such a character--are as opposite as white and black, as light and darkness. Indeed, we scarcely need Revelation to tell us this, for it is so in things secular, and it must be certainly applicable to religion. We meet in common life with persons who say that they are rich, but this does not make them so. They apply for credit and say that they are wealthy when they are worth nothing. Companies will ask for your money with which they may speculate, and they say that they are sound, but they are oftentimes found to be rotten. Though some of them make a very fair show in the prospectus, the result appears very foul in the winding-up of the association. Persons have been known to say that they were of distinguished rank, but when they have had to prove their title before the House of Lords, oftentimes has it been discovered that they have made a mistake. Lunatics in Bethlehem Hospital, near here, have been found by scores to say that they were kings or queens. In the old houses, where madmen were confined, it often happened that some poor creature twisted a crown of straw, put it on his head, and said that he was a monarch. But that did not make him so. No armies arose at his bidding. No fleets crossed the ocean to do his will. No tribute was brought to his feet. He remained a poor pauper madman still, though he said that he was a king.

Many a time you have found the difference, in your commercial transactions, between blank saying and positive truth. A man has said that he would meet that bill, or that he would discharge that debt. He has said that the rent should be paid when it was due. He has said a thousand things--and you have found out that it was easy enough for him to say, but it was not quite so easy for you to obtain the doing of it. And when the engagement has been turned to writing, registered, and

made as fast as black and white can make it, you have not found it thoroughly reliable, for to say by subscribing a contract or covenant does not always make it certain that a man will fulfill it. To say is not necessarily a pledge of good faith, or a warrant against treachery. Rest assured, then, that if in these temporal matters to say is not the same thing as to be or to do, neither is it so in spiritual things. A minister may say that he is sent of God, and yet be a wolf in sheep's clothing. A man may say that he unites himself to the Church of God, but he may be no better than a hypocrite and an alien who has no part in her fellowship. We may say that we pray, and yet never a prayer may come from our hearts. We may say to our fellow men that we are Christians, and yet we may never have been born again--never have obtained the precious faith of God's elect-- never have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ.

And, Sirs, as you would not be satisfied with merely saying that you are rich. As you want the title-deeds of the broad acres. As you want to hear the coins chink in your box. As you want the real thing, and not the mere saying of it-- so, I pray you, be not put off with the mere profession of religion. Be not content with a bare assertion, or think that is enough. Seek to have your own profession verified by the witness of Heaven, as well as by that of your own conscience. It is not written, "He that says he believes shall be saved." But "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." It is not said that he who says he has confessed shall be forgiven. But "He that confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy." Your mere sayers, though they say, "Lord, open to us," and aver that Christ did eat in their streets, shall have for an answer, "I never knew you! Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity."

Let us not be gulled and deceived. Let us not be duped and taken in by

any notion that saying so makes it so! Take heed, lest with a flattering tongue you do impose on your own soul. Standing in view of that Eye which penetrates the inmost heart, may we learn to distinguish between the mere profession and the full possession of real Grace and vital godliness.

The matter in hand tonight, in which this distinction is to be made, is the knowing of Christ. Let us speak first about what it is to know Him, then about knowing that we know Him. And after that, solemnly expostulate with those who merely say that they know Him.

I. The matter to be considered and judged tonight by each man for himself is THE KNOWING OF CHRIST. What, then, is it to know Christ? Of course we have never seen Him. Many years ago He left this world and ascended to His Father. Still we can know Him. It is possible. There have been thousands, and even millions, who have had a personal acquaintance with Him, Whom, though they have not seen, they loved, and in Whom they have rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

To "know" is a word used in Scripture in several senses. Sometimes it means to acknowledge. As when we read of a certain Pharaoh, that "he knew not Joseph." That is, he did not acknowledge any obligation of the state or kingdom to Joseph. He remembered not what had been done by that great man. So, too, Christ says that His sheep "know" His voice. They acknowledge His voice as being the voice of their Shepherd, and cheerfully follow where their Shepherd leads. Now, it is a matter of the first necessity to acknowledge Christ--that He is God, that He is the Son of the Father, that He is the Savior of His people, and the rightful Monarch of the world--to acknowledge more--that you accept Him as your Savior, as your King, as your Prophet, as your Priest.

This is, in a certain sense, to know Christ. That is, to own and confess in your heart that He is God, in the glory of God the Father.

That He is your Redeemer. That His blood has washed you, and His righteousness covers you. That He is your salvation, your only hope, and your fondest desire.

The word "know" means, in the next place, to believe. As in that passage, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many"--where it is evidently meant that by the knowledge of Him, that is to say, by faith in Christ Jesus, He would justify many. To "know" and to "believe" are sometimes used in Scripture as convertible terms. Now, in this sense we must know Christ. We must believe Him, we must trust Him, we must accept the reports of the Prophets and Apostles respecting Him. And we must subscribe to them, practically, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and lean the whole burden of our everlasting destiny upon His finished work. To know Him, then, is to acknowledge Him, and to believe in Him.

This is not all. The word to "know" often means experience. It is said of our Lord that, "He knew no sin." That is to say, He never experienced sin. He never became a sinner. To know Christ, then, we must feel and prove His power, His pardoning power, His power of love over the heart, His reigning power in subduing our passions, His comforting power, His enlightening power, His elevating power, and all those other blessed influences which, through the Holy Spirit, proceed from Christ. This is to experience Him. And once more, to "know" in Scripture often means to commune. Eliphaz says, "Acquaint yourself with God, be at peace with Him." That is to say, commune with Him, get into friendship and fellowship with Him.

So it is necessary that every Believer should know Christ by having an acquaintance with Him, by speaking with Him in prayer and praise--by laying bare one's heart to His heart--receiving from Him the Divine secret, and imparting to Him the full confession of all our sins and

griefs. In a word, dear Brethren, to know Christ is very much the same as to know any other person. When you know a man, if he is your intimate friend, you trust him, you love him, you esteem him, you are on speaking terms with him. You not only bow to him in the street, but you go to his house. You sit down with him at his table. At other times you hold counsel with him, or you ask his assistance. And he comes to your house, and you hold familiar association, the one with the other. There is a good understanding between you and the man of whom it may be truly said that you know him.

On such terms must the soul be with Christ. He must not be merely an historic personage of whom we read in the pages of Scripture. But He must be a real Person with Whom we can speak in spirit, commune in heart, and be united in the bonds of love. We must know Him, His very Person, so as to love and to trust Him as a real Lord to us. Judge, then, each one, yourselves--whether you really and indeed, in this sense, "know" Christ.

Do distinguish, however, between knowing about Christ and knowing Christ. We may know very much about many of our great men, though we do not know them. Now it will never save a soul to know about Christ. The only saving knowledge is to know Him, His very Self, and to trust Him, the living Savior, who is now at the right hand of God. To Him it is we speak. With Him in very deed we commune.

Nor does it say that if we are able to speak about Him, therefore we are saved. Lest the music of your own tongue beguile you, remember how easy some people find it to talk fluently, eloquently, properly, and persuasively of persons they never knew. They had read it. They had stored it up in their memories, and they told it out again. They may vindicate the reputation of some hero or statesman in company where it is disgraced though they never knew any more of him than the fame that

has reached their ears. Ah, but this is not enough here.

You may be as fluent as Whitefield. Yes, you may be eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures as was Apollos. But if you do not know Christ by your own individual, personal acquaintance with His Person, with His righteousness, and with His blood, you will not be saved by all your fine speeches. Rather are you in imminent peril, that out of your own mouth you will be condemned. Such knowledge as we now refer to is inestimably precious. Get knowledge, classical or mathematical--apply yourself to literature, or study the sciences, enjoy the vast hoard of knowledge bequeathed to us by antiquity, or endeavor to augment that hoard, and transmit it to future ages--but after all, there is no knowledge that can ever match that of the Christ once crucified, now risen and exalted, and expected soon to return in Glory.

Such knowledge as this is incomparable. It dives deep into the mine of God's eternal purpose. It soars high into the Heaven of God's everlasting love. It enlarges the soul by filling it with the inexhaustible fullness of Christ--Christ the wisdom of God--Whom THE LORD possessed in the beginning of His way before His works of old. O Sirs, he that gets such knowledge need not seek for degrees at the universities. He who has Christ has the highest imaginable degree. And, blessed forever be the name of my God, such knowledge can never be lost. If you know Christ, you have that written on the tablet of your heart which Satan shall never erase, which time shall never dim, which the iron hand of death shall never be able to blot out. There shall it stand forever.

You know Him, and you are known of Him, "and they shall be Mine, says the Lord, in the day when I make up My jewels." "The Lord knows them that are His." They that know Him He knows, and He will confess them to be His own in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father, and all

His holy angels with Him. I speak but simply, though I feel intensely the importance of this subject. A great solemnity surrounds it. Life and death, Heaven and Hell, are here clearly legible. For if you know Christ, it is well with you, but if you know Him not, you are ignorant of the one thing which can save your soul.

II. Having laid down the matter that is propounded, we shall advance to speak OF THE TWO CHARACTERS THAT ARE PORTRAYED IN THE TEXT. With respect to the one--those who know that they know Him. We are told how they know that they know Him--"We know that we do know Him, if we keep His commandments."

Some Christians who do know Christ are in great doubt as to whether they know Him. This ought not to be. It is too solemn a matter to be left to chance or conjecture. I believe there are saved ones who do not know of a surety that they are saved. They are raising the question often that never ought to be a question. No man ought to be content to leave that unsettled, for mark you, my Hearer or Reader, if you are not a saved man, you are a condemned man. If you are not forgiven, your sins lie on you. You are now in danger of Hell if you are not now secure of Heaven, for there is no place between these two. You are either a child of God, or not. Why do you say, "I hope I am a child of God, yet I do not know. I hope, yet I do not know that I am forgiven"? In such suspense you ought not to be. You are either one or the other--either a saint or a sinner--either saved or lost, either walking in the light or walking in the dark.

Oh, it is very urgent that we should know that we know Him! Though, as I have already said, to know Him is the paramount matter--next to that there is nothing so important as to know that we know Him. Do you ask what service it would render you? It would give you such comfort as nothing else could. To know that you know Christ is a perennial joy,

and an unfailing consolation under the heaviest trial. This is a candle that will shine in the dark night, and give you all the light that you shall want between here and Heaven. If I know that I know Christ, then all things are mine. Things present and things to come are alike in the Covenant of Grace. I am rich to all the intents of bliss, and the knowledge thereof is comfort indeed!

You who are living on "perhaps" and "maybe," are living on dust and ashes. A piece of bread that is full of grit and dirt will break your teeth if you try to eat it. But, oh, if you can but get to know, to be persuaded, to be assured, to be confident, then shall you eat bread that is better than that which angels eat, and like Jonathan, when he touched the honey with his rod, and put it to his lips, you shall find your eyes enlightened!

Nor is it joy alone you would find from this knowledge. It would no less certainly bring you confidence. When a man knows that he knows Christ, what confidence he has in meeting temptations! "Shall such a man as I flee?" What confidence in prayer! He asks believingly, as children beloved ask of a generous parent. And what a confident air this assurance before God would give us with the sons of men! We should not stammer in the presence of their philosophers, or look abashed in the presence of their nobles. But knowing that we knew Him, Whom to know is life eternal, we should not mind though they called us ignorant, or frowned at us as ignoble and presumptuous. We should not blush to confess our faith with an elevated self-possession. Our courage would no more fail us in the pestilential swamps of the world, than our enthusiasm would subside in the fertile garden of the Church, knowing that we shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

And this certainty that you know Christ would kindle in you the very highest degree of love. Knowing that I am saved, knowing that I am His,

and He is mine, I cannot but feel the flames of affection towards Him glowing like coals of juniper. That love leads me to obedience, and that obedience develops in me fervor and zeal. Knowing that you know Him, you will be ready to cry out with a holy passion, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" You will sing with ecstasy of His free Grace that made you know Him, and of His sovereign, distinguishing love, that embraced you--

"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing My dear Redeemer's praise!"

You cannot tell, dear Christians, you who are exercised with faint misgivings or with tormenting fears, what a great and infinite blessing this assurance would be to you--how it would make life seem young and like a thing Divine! To you who are converted, it would be like a second conversion. You are now bedridden with sick thoughts. Could you once know that you know Christ, you would leave that sick bed and pant no more to return to it, but enjoy the air, walk abroad, and fulfill joyfully your allotted tasks. I pray that the Master may say to many of you who are bowed with a spirit of infirmity, "Be made straight." And to others who have long lain on this bed of doubts and fears, "Take up your bed, and walk."

Do you desire this sweet balm for an uneasy conscience? Observe the prescription, "Hereby we know that we do know Him if we keep His commandments." It is in the keeping of His commandments that this sound state of the soul's health is enjoyed. Do you ask for further explanation? It means to keep His commandments in our minds, and hold them fast in our memory with devout reverence. It should be the object of every Christian to find out what Christ's command is. And, this done, never to ask another question, but receive it with meekness, meditate upon its holy sanction, and venerate it as the Law of the Lord's House.

If Christ has said it, I dare not cavil, argue, or question, much less rebel. It is mine to keep His commandments in my heart as a sacred trust. As precious treasures more to be desired than gold, and with a yet increasing relish, as luxuries to the taste, sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. But to keep them in our hearts, we must earnestly desire to fulfill them. By reason of the Fall we cannot perfectly keep the commands of Christ, but the heart keeps them as the standard of purity, and it would be perfect if it could. The Christian's only desire is to be exactly like Christ. It pains him that he falls short of His image. It gives him great joy if be can feel that the Holy Spirit is working in him anything like conformity to the Divine will.

His heart is right towards God, sincerely so. This is not enough unless there is a constant, persevering aim to fulfill His commandments in our lives. Depend upon it, Brethren, that the want of practical obedience to Christ is the root of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of our doubts and fears. The roots of our fears are in our sins. Search there, and you shall find the cause of soul trouble. I believe many a child of God walks in darkness because he does not obey the Word of the Lord. Take that sentence for your motto which the mother of Jesus addressed to the servants at the marriage in Cana of Galilee--"Whatever He says unto you, do it."

Is it so that you often hear the precept with never a thought of heeding it? Then beware lest you "suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Or does your conscience smart with sore rebuke as often as it is mentioned? Then it is with you as with one who gets a wound in battle, and the sword that made it plunges through the wound again and pricks it deeper. Good cause is there, my Friend, for your unrest. If so be, you have an open wound left to fester. Christ commands you, for instance, to be baptized, and do you resist His will?

Seek you some frivolous pretext, saying, "I pray you have me excused"? "He that knows his Master's will and does it not, the same shall be beaten with many stripes." Many a stripe has fallen upon a professed Believer because he has not been obedient to that injunction. The command that we should love each other is far too lightly esteemed by many. Now, if you do not love your fellow Christians fervently with a pure heart, can you wonder that you fall into doubts? It is natural that it should be so. Only in proportion as Divine Grace makes you obedient will Divine Grace make you an assured Christian. Your holiness and your confidence will keep pace together if your confidence is worth having.

Presumption outruns holiness, but confidence never does. It is little matter of surprise to me when some men doubt whether they are saved. There are grave reasons why they should, since their lives are so little saturated with the Spirit of their Master. Well may you and I bemoan ourselves before God in the silent watches of the night, because, having experienced so much mercy we do so little in His service, and having seen so much of His Character we are so little like our Lord. Depend upon it, if you want to kill your doubts and fears, you must kill your sins, by God's Grace, by exterminating disobedience. We shall also exterminate the mass of our despondency, if not the whole of it.

Although, my dear Brethren, I never said, nor thought that you must be perfect before you could be assured that you were a Christian, I tell you that you will never be altogether beyond doubts and fears till you are altogether beyond sin. And that will not be, I think, till you reach the other shore. A dear Friend in Christ wanted to debate this question with me some time ago--whether perfection was possible in this world. I told him I would rather not, but if he and I both

tried to attain it, it would be the best way to settle the controversy.

I only trust that my friend may reach it. I am half afraid I never shall, but I will leave no stone unturned to try. Who knows how far God may enable any single, watchful, prayerful soul to go? At any rate, take it as a rule, that as God gives you holiness, so God will give you assurance. And in proportion as you mar the fidelity of your obedience, in that proportion you will mar your evidences and weaken your knowledge that you know Him.

Let me just give you an illustration of this point before I leave it. When our Lord met the disciples at Emmaus, and talked with them, they did not know Him while He talked with them. When do you think they did know that they knew Him? Why, not until they performed an act of obedience by offering hospitality to a stranger. Then He was known to them in the breaking of bread. Yes, there is a blessed eye-clearing to many and many a child of God when he comes to give of his bread to the poor and needy, and when he comes to the Table of the Lord, in remembrance of His death. He shall then know that he knows Him.

We are told that the cherubim have wings, but they also have hands under their wings. True children of God have knowledge, but they have under their knowledge practice. And you have no good proof that you are a child of God because you have the wings of knowledge, unless you have also the hands of practice. Would one ascertain how much a sheep had eaten? It could be seen in no better way than by showing how much fat, and flesh, and wool it had gathered. So with a Christian. If you want to know how much he has lived on Christ, see how much of zeal, how much of obedience, how much of holiness he has gathered. For "hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

III. We now come to the last consideration. It hurls a momentous charge against dissemblers. There is such a thing as saying that we know

Christ--but if any man say that he knows Christ, and keeps not His commandments, such a man is a liar--plain speech is this--he is a liar, and the Truth is not in him.

I would have you, my dear Friends, give earnest heed to these words, because, while it is an easy thing to say that you know Him, there are many temptations so to do in a Church like this. When many are impressed, and a great number of your friends and acquaintances profess that they know Christ, you may easily fall into the current. Indeed, it may be hard to resist the tide, and perhaps without really knowing Him in your souls, you may be led, for the sake of companionship, to say that you know Him. Oh, I beseech you, never do this! If you know that you know Him, confess that knowledge at once. But never, never, never be induced to say anything beyond what you know.

To let the tongue outrun the witness of the conscience is to betray guile in the heart. And the man whose sin is forgiven is one in whose spirit there is no guile. No, no! As you love your souls, keep your hands off all profession unless you have true possession. A man may tell a story so often, that though it is not true, he may at last come to believe it. I can think of one or two notable stories of good old friends that one always listens to without raising a question--though never without suspecting that they have gradually accumulated attritions of exaggeration. We may smile at the fiction whose tangled threads were woven thus to please the ear and tickle the fancy. But we tremble at the slow, almost imperceptible growth of a dire falsehood which beguiles a man's own soul.

He may first of all say he hopes that he loves Christ. Then he may say, "Others think I do, and therefore I feel assured I do." And soon he may say this and that, with an air that satisfies his friends and gratifies himself, until he makes his poor deluded heart believe a lie. Yes, and

I know he may go on the dupe of his own credulity to his grave, and perhaps even at the Judgment Seat of Christ he may say that he knows Christ, only then to awaken from his treacherous dream, when he shall hear Christ say--"I never knew you. Depart from Me, you worker of iniquity." O God, save us from this! Let us never say we know Him, unless in very deed and truth we know Christ and are found in Him.

Now, John says that to say we know Christ, and not to keep His commandments is a lie. It is a verbal lie. The man who utters it speaks a lie. He says, "I know Christ." But it is a falsehood. He does not know Him. He knows about Him-- but his heart knows nothing of Jesus. It is a doctrinal lie, for it would be an awful heresy to say that a man who lived in sin knew Christ--that one who was a drunkard, or a thief, or unchaste--had acquaintance with the Savior. Does Christ keep such company? Does He call these His friends? The men who set the taproom on a roar? Your merry-makers, who can sing lascivious songs--are these Christ's friends? I know Christ keeps better company than this. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is a lie against the doctrines of the Gospel.

And it is a practical lie. The man who says, "I know Him," and then goes and breaks the commands of Christ--every time he sins tells a lie. People can tell lies when they hold their tongues, as I pointed out to the little children when ad-

dressing them last Sunday afternoon. There was a little girl at school who always held her hand up when the boys and girls were asked to show in this manner that they knew the answer to any question that had been put to them. One afternoon she held her hand up when she did not know the answer, and a little school fellow said to her, "Jane, you did not know that." And she said, "No. But I thought teacher would think better of me if she thought I know it." "Ah," said the other, "but that is

telling a lie with your hand."

Yes, and you may equally act a lie. A man who professes to be a Christian when he is not hangs out false colors on Sunday, and all through the week he plays the liar's part. Were his profession true, surely his conduct would be consistent with it! It is a corrosive lie, a lie that eats into the man's soul, corrupts and cankers it, so that, as John says, "The Truth is not in him." The man that begins by lying about his relation to God soon becomes hardened to lying in the community of his fellow men. Some of the greatest rogueries and robberies ever committed have been perpetrated by professing Christian men.

How often, when we have heard of a gigantic fraud, has there been some canting hypocrite or other connected with it! This is very natural, it is scarcely surprising. For when the man had come to deceive himself, to dissemble in things sacred, and to lie to God, he was such a practiced hand that the devil could not find a fitter vassal to lie to men. O take care of trifling with your convictions! You may flatter yourself with the vain conceit that you will never cheat anybody. I am not so sure. If a man would rob God, he would rob his mother. If he once gives the lie to God by making a false profession, I know not where he may stay his hand. Who, who would have sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver? Who, but Judas, he that professed to be His follower, His disciple, His private secretary, and His treasurer. Though all the while his heart was false to his Lord! It is a traitorous profession that breeds gigantic sins.

Once again, it is a damning lie. The man that says, "I know Christ," and does not keep His commandments, is making his own damnation sure. He signs, seals, and stamps it every day. By his profession of being a follower of Christ he confesses that he knows what he ought to be, yet

by his actions he proves that he is not what he ought to be. And so he is bearing witness against himself, judging himself, condemning his own soul, and challenging the dread sentence of everlasting perdition. God save us from such a lie as this!

Before I conclude now, it behooves me to point out some of those characters upon which the brand must be fixed-- they are liars. If there are any such here, may their consciences be pricked. There have been persons who have professed their faith in Christ, but who have been in the habit of acting dishonestly. They have been negotiating fictitious bills. They have been stealing small articles out of shops. They have taken little sums of money out of tills. They have been dealing with short weights, and selling wares with wrong marks--and all this time they have said that they knew Christ.

Now, one of His commandments is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," and another one is, "You shall not steal." And in not keeping these they have proved themselves to be liars, though they called themselves Christians. Some who have professed faith in Christ have been drunkards. Present here tonight--I do not say they are now members of the Church, but they have been--are those who have fallen into habits of intemperance. I am afraid there are some who, though they escape the odium of detection, as they have not to go home at night from the public house, manage to drink pretty hard at home. Depend upon it, you who secretly indulge this vicious propensity are not less guilty, and shall not be more lightly judged by God than those who sin openly--who are locked up for being drunk on the Saturday night--and have to pay five shillings and costs on the Monday morning. You may be respectable in the eyes of your fellow men, but you are disreputable and scandalous hypocrites in the sight of Heaven. Some, too, there are of good standing in society--young men who have made a

profession of faith--who can take pleasure in haunts that are something more than dubious. It is a shameful thing for a professor of Christianity to be found in those music halls, saloons, and places of revelry in London where you cannot go without your morals being polluted. You can neither open your eyes nor your ears without knowing at once that you are in the outskirts of Satan's domain.

I charge you by the living God, if you cannot keep good company and avoid the circle of dissipation, do not profess to be followers of Christ! He bids you come out from among them! Be you separate, touch not the unclean thing. If you can find pleasure in lewd society and lascivious songs, what right have you to mingle with the fellowship of saints, or to join in the singing of Psalms? You do not keep the commandments, you violate them. The Truth is not in you, you betray it. And what shall we say of those who, while making a profession of religion, have been addicted to uncleanness? Sins that ought not to be spoken of among us lest the cheek of modesty should be made to blush, have been committed in secret by such as would be accounted Christian men. God have mercy upon unchaste professors, for whoredom is a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord do fall into it. If any here have so fallen, may they lay aside their profession, for they bear the marks of God's abhorrence. Let them not come into His holy place, let them not gather to His Table, neither let them from this day on count themselves His children. Such they cannot be--their profession is a lie.

The covetous! The greedy! The grasping! Those who see their Brethren have needs and shut up the heart of their compassion! To each of you the Master's words are very strong--"How dwells the love of God in him?" Covetousness is idolatry! If you are eaten up of the world. If money is your God, you are as surely condemned as if you had been

dishonest or unchaste. And are there not others whose tongue is perverse and unruly, and their conversation often far from pure? Alas, when it comes to this--that men should presume to the Supper of the Lord who can hurl out an oath! That men who have been known, when excited, to blaspheme and use profane language should yet with the same mouth draw near to feed upon the emblems of the Savior's passion! O Sirs, if you had a conscience, surely you would not dare to come! If your hearts had any feeling left in them, you would tremble to be found among the people of God while your speech blasphemes the Most High. Is there one virtue of superlative excellence, peculiarly Christian, supported by the frequent precept and the unparalleled example of our Lord Jesus--surely it is that of forgiving injuries. Yet I have known some of His disciples, as they would have us believe, who have been unforgiving. Christians they called themselves, yet they could not forgive a trespass, were it even of their own children! A resentful, malicious Christian--what an anomaly! Did you not lately hear of a man, great and high in station--was he not a bishop?--who cut his daughter off with a shilling, or rather without a shilling, because she had married against his will? Ah, these things are not fit to be whispered about, nor is it possible for them to be kept in secret.

I tell you, if you love not your Brethren, if you love not your own child, if you cannot forgive your child--there is nothing more certain in the book of God than this--that you will never enter Heaven. An unforgiving spirit is an unfor-given spirit. First, go and forgive your Brother before you bring your sacrifice, or God will neither accept you nor your offering. Are we not taught to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us"?

It has been hard work for me thus to mention these inconsistencies. I cannot venture farther, though I might have stated more. The labor of

my lips is a burden to my heart. If any man's conscience smite him--well, let it smite him hard, let it smite him till it drives him from his sin--let it smite him till he falls at the feet of Jesus, a contrite suppliant for pardon. O be thorough, be thorough! If you wish to be washed from sin, eschew the sin, the penalties of which you dread. If you profess to know Christ, have nothing to do with a sinful world. Shake off the viper into the fire, for it will poison you and destroy you. God grant that you may renounce sin, if you profess in very deed to be the servants of Christ.

My last word is this. If any man now feels himself troubled on account of sin, let me read these words to him, and I have done. Hear them in faith. They are the words that come before the text. "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." O come, you guilty ones, you guilty professors, you that have been false to your Lord and to His love! Come to Him notwithstanding all your bitter provocations. "And He is the Mercy Seat: the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Look you, then, look and live! Whether saints or sinners, whatever your past lives may have been, look to the Propitiatory Sacrifice offered on Calvary's bloody tree! Look and live! The Lord grant it for His dear Son's sake. Amen.

Chapter 15

Prepare To Meet Your God

(No. 923)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Prepare to meet your God, O Israel." Amos 4:12.

GOD had, in the days of Amos, by different ways rebuked the sin of His people Israel. He had wasted them with famine and sword. He had withheld the rain. He had sent forth the pestilence after the manner of Egypt. He had smitten their fields and gardens with blast and mildew, and He had overthrown some of them, as Sodom and Gomorrah. But they still persevered in their rebellion, and therefore He declares that He will send them no more of His messengers, and shoot no more of His far-reaching arrows, but will come Himself, in His own Person, to deal with them.

God's way of dealing with rebellious humanity, is, at first to upbraid and persuade with words--soft, gentle, tender words. These He repeats many times, accompanying them with tokens of tenderness and Grace. By-and-by He exchanges these words of tenderness for words of mingled threat--He begins to expostulate with them--why will they drive Him to this? Why will they die? Why will they bring ruin upon themselves? Then, if words are of no effect upon them, He turns to blows--but His strokes fall softly at first. Yet if these avail not, His strokes gather strength, till at last He smites them with the blows of a cruel one, and wounds them sorely.

If after this the sinners remain obstinate, the Lord's longsuffering turns to wrath, and He says, "Why should you be stricken any more? You

will revolt more and more. Already your whole head is sick and your whole heart faint. What shall I do unto you? What shall I do unto you?" Things have come to a dreadful pass when at last the Lord puts aside the rod, when He puts aside afflictions which He has sent as chastisements, and comes forth Himself to end the strife, crying, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies." Such was the position of Israel in the text. They had scorned all the milder dealings of God, and now He says to them, "Prepare to meet Me, even God Himself, in all the terror of justice." The Prophet may be understood as in irony challenging the proud rebels to meet in arms the God whom they have despised. Let them prepare to fight it out with Him whom they have made to be their enemy, and against whose Laws they have so continually revolted. "Prepare," says the Prophet, "O you potsherds, to strive with your Maker! You worms, to battle with Omnipotence." As it stands, the text is an awful challenge of Almighty wrath when at last longsuffering vacates the throne, and Justice bares its two-edged sword. Woe, woe, woe to boastful scoffers in that great and terrible day!

We shall not, however, dwell upon the particular position of the text, nor confine ourselves to the meaning of the words as the Prophet used them. We shall, however, hope as fully as possible to illustrate the natural sense of the text, in the hope that such earnest and solemn words may awaken in some hearts tenderness towards God, and the desire to be prepared to meet Him. "Prepare to meet your God." We have before us a most important call, and we shall consider first the many tones in which it may be uttered. Secondly, the heavy tidings conveyed by it to the ungodly. And thirdly, the weighty admonition given there.

I. First, then, let us think of these words in THEIR DIFFERENT TONES. They vary from grave to gay, from dread to delight--"Prepare to meet

your God." Why, methinks there are no more joyous words under Heaven than these under some aspects, certainly none more solemn out of Hell under others. "Prepare to meet your God." These words may have sounded through the green alleys of Paradise, and have caused no discord there. Blending with the sweet song of new-created birds, these notes would have but given emphasis to the harmony.

Often from the mossy couch whereon he reclined in the happy life of his innocence and bliss, the great sire of men would be aroused by this holy summons. When the sun first scattered the shades of darkness, and began to gild the tops of the snow-clad hills with morning light, Adam was awakened by the birds amid the groves of Eden, whose earliest song his heart interpreted, as meaning, "Awake, O wondrous man, and prepare to meet your God." Then climbing some ver-

dant hill from where he looked down upon the landscape, all aglow with glory and with God, Adam would, in holy rapture, meet his God.

And in lowly reverence would speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. Then, too, at eventide, the dewdrops, as they fell, each one would say to that blessed man, "Prepare to meet your God." The lengthened shadows would silently give forth the same message, and perhaps it is no imagination, angels would alight upon lawns adorned with lilies, and pause where Adam stood pruning the growth of some too luxuriant vine, and would with courteous speech remind him that the day's work was over, for the sun was descending to the western sea, and it was time for the favored creature to have audience with his God.

The faintest intimation would suffice for our first parent, for the crown of Paradise to him was the Presence of the Lord God. And Eden's rivers, though they flowed over sands of gold, had no river in them equal to the stream whereby the spirit of Adam was gladdened when he had communion with the Most High. For then he drank from that river of

the water of life which flows from underneath the throne of the Great Supreme. Unfallen man had no greater joy than walking with God. It was Heaven on earth to meet in converse tender and sublime with the great Father of Spirits. No marriage bells ever rang out a sweeter or more joyous melody than these glad words as they were heard amid the myrtle bowers and palm groves of Eden by our first parents in the heyday of their innocence, "Prepare to meet your God."

Then, when Jehovah walked in the garden in the cool of the day, He had no need to say aloud, "Adam, where are you?" For His happy creature whom He has made to have dominion over all the works of His hands was waiting for Him as a child waits for his father when the day's work is done--watching to hear his father's footsteps, and to see his father's face. Oh, yes! Those were words in fullest harmony with Eden's joys, "Prepare to meet your God."

But, Brethren, weep not over those withered glories as those who are without hope, for the words have something of a heavenly sound to those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We, though fallen and sinful, and therefore naturally averse to God, have, many of us, been renewed in the spirit of our minds, and now oftentimes to us the welcome message comes, "Prepare to meet your God," in a sense most delightful and most entrancing. It is our summons to devotion. It is morning, and as we put on our garments before we go forth to the battle of life, the angel of the Lord whispers to us, "Prepare to meet your God."

And on our knees we seek our Father's face, and pray that we may be under His guardian care throughout the day. Think not that the holy Voice is silent until nightfall. Oh, no, oftentimes as business gives us pauses, and as our avocations may allow us leisure, we hear the inner life, or what if I say the indwelling Holy Spirit, softly saying

to our heart, "Prepare to meet your God." And we, in spirit, put off our shoes from our feet, and feel that the place whereon we stand is holy ground! We may be in a poor workshop, but our spirit makes it a cathedral as it has communion with the Most High. Our study may be littered over with our books, and papers, and letters. But it becomes a sacred oratory on a sudden, and all things fall into order as the Voice is heard and obeyed.

Perhaps we may be in the cornfield, or on the barley mow, but if the Voice says, "Prepare to meet your God," the true heart stands as a priest before the altar, and worships in spirit and in Truth. Even the streets of busy London may become a silent temple when the heart is solemnly absorbed in worship. For preparation to meet our God means no change of vestments, nor even the washing of the hands. There is a cleansing of the heart, and a putting on of the white linen, which in the righteousness of saints is performed in a moment, and the soul stands before her God in happy fellowship.

Then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are set times with us when we prepare to meet our God, as for instance, on the eve of the Lord's-day. It always seems to me to be so pleasant at the family altar to make mention of the coming Sunday and to ask the Lord that we may lay aside our cares. Ask Him that we may be quit of every earthly impediment, and may sit in the heavenly places on the Day of Rest with our Father and our God. I know how late some of you have to keep your shops open on Saturday nights, and how it almost runs into the Sunday before you can be done with your business--but still I hope you do before you come here make a point of preparing for this meeting place with God by meeting Him first at home.

I would not have you come here unprepared, as though the mere coming into the assembly would be enough. I anxiously desire to see you come

with prepared hearts, with longing appetites, with holy aspirations. Bring your harps with you already tuned. Make ready for the holy convocation. Lay by in store your offering, prepare your song, uplift your

heart. Yes, and besides the Sundays, there are certain other times with us when we are especially called to meet our God. We keep no holy days by the almanac, but we have holy days apportioned us by Providence and by the Holy Spirit. I mean that there are seasons hallowed by holy memories, or by present circumstances when sorrow and joy, earth and Heaven, all without and within, bear to us a call both loud and sweet, "Prepare to meet your God."

Then we set apart a special time. The hour is consecrated to secret communion. God has claimed His portion of the day, and we sacredly guard it by entering into our closet and shutting the door. Inward motions of the Holy Spirit frequently calls us away to loneliness--let us not be slow to follow the blessed bidding. The voice of the Beloved invites us to His banquet of wine. He allures us to the secret chambers where Divine Love is revealed. He bids us stand in the cleft of the rock, while the glory of Godhead passes by. On such happy seasons, and I hope they are not infrequent with us, the silver trumpets of Jubilee ring through our souls the notes, "Prepare to meet your God," and then our motto is, "Up, and away, to the beds of spices, to the garden of pomegranates, where the Beloved will reveal Himself and give us an audience with the King."

Once again, these words, "Prepare to meet your God," have no gloomy significance to some of my dear Brothers and Sisters here present, even though we attach to them the sense of the Believer's meeting God in a disembodied state. Christians, especially when they grow aged, must often hear the angel whisper, "Prepare to meet your God." From the

inevitable process of decay which takes place in the body--from the failure of eyesight, the tottering of the limbs, and the gray hairs--there must come subdued and tender voices, all saying, "Prepare to meet your God."

The tent is being taken down, the cord is loosed, the tent pin no longer holds to the earth. Soon must the canvas be rolled up and put away. But you have a House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Look up, then, and prepare to dwell there. Prepare your spirit not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon with your House which is from Heaven. My aged Brothers and Sisters, I can imagine how it is with you. The dear friends who have been the companions of your childhood and your manhood depart before you, and as they wing their happy flight to the land of the living, they look back and say, "Prepare to follow us."

Nor are you at all grieved at such an invitation! Rather do you sometimes feel impatient for the gladsome time when you may join that cloud of doves which flock to those everlasting windows and find their resting places with the Well-Beloved. Friends gathering in the upper sanctuary beckon to you whose years are threescore and ten, and you feel the attractions of their blessed society on happy Sundays when the atmosphere of your souls is clear, and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth with power! You dwell in the land, Beulah, and behold so vividly the New Jerusalem and its royal Lord, that, as though an angel spoke, you hear the sound, "Prepare to meet your God."

Often when the hymn is swelling up to Heaven, you feel as if you could mount upon it and pass through the gate of pearl. At the holy Supper Table, how loud is the call to come up higher into the excellent glory! Young as I am, and earthbound--to me, even to me--the Communion Table has made me unloose my cable, spread my sails, and long for that last voyage which shall make this world a foreign shore, and the glory land

the harbor of our spirits. Surely, my aged Brethren, it must be far more so with you who have so many friends across the water, so many of your best beloved on the other side of Jordan! Your strength of experience and your weakness of body must both tend to give frequency to the message, "Prepare to meet your God." To you the tidings are happy. You are exiles and you long for Home, you are children at school and you pine for your Father's House.

But now I must pass on to notice that those words have not always that sweet ring of the silver bells about them. They are words of caution to the vast majority of men. "Prepare to meet your God." Alas, How many of you to whom I now speak are unprepared! It pains me to think of it. As I sat last night about eight o'clock, revolving in my mind a subject for this hour's discourse, there came a knock at my door, and I was earnestly entreated by a father to hasten to the deathbed of his dear girl. I wanted much my time for preparation, but as the dear one was in such a case, and had long been a constant hearer of the Word in this Tabernacle, I felt it my duty to go whether I could prepare a sermon or not.

Glad I was to hear that sick one's testimony. She told me with what, I fear was her dying breath, that she was not fully assured of her interest in Christ, but she left me no room to doubt when, between paroxysms and convulsions, she said, "I know I do love Jesus, and that is all I know." Yes, and I thought it is all I want to know. If any one of us always knows that he loves the Savior, what more does he require of testimony as to his state? But my mind was sore oppressed then, as it is now, with the thought that so many of you are not prepared to die at all. I see my sermons in sick rooms,

often, and I come to think of preaching sermons in a different light from what many do. I will try to preach sermons which will suit your

most solemn hours and most serious circumstances.

I would gladly deliver sermons which shall haunt your sickbeds, and accuse you unless you yield to their persuasions, and believe in Jesus. When you lie on the borders of the spirit world, you will count all religious trifling to be cruel mockery. So let me say it affectionately, but very earnestly, to you, "Prepare to meet your God," for I am afraid many of you are quite unprepared. You have seen others die. They preach to you from their graves, and they say, "So to the dust must you also come, my Friend. Be you ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will call for you."

You have had sicknesses in your own body. You are not now the strong man you once were. You have already passed through many perils. What are all these but voices from the God of Mercy saying, "Consider your ways"? You are not such a simpleton as to think that you shall never die--you know you will. Neither are you so insane as to think that when you die, your death will be that of a horse or a dog. You know there is a hereafter and a state of being in which men shall be judged according to the deeds that they have done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. May I therefore press upon your earnest recollection, and your intense consideration at this present moment, the exhortation of the text, "Prepare to meet your God!"

Once more, let me say that this sound, as I have now put it, has little melody in it. It will by-and-by be heard in ungodly ears as a peremptory summons--and then there shall be no music in it, but a horrid clang that shall drive away all hope--"Prepare to meet your God." That summons will come to each one of you unconverted people, and when it comes it will admit of no postponement. Call in the wisest surgeon, or the most accomplished physician, and he cannot put off for an hour the execution of God's death-warrant. "Prepare to meet your

God," will mean that at such a time, and such an hour, and at such a moment, the spirit must return to God who gave it.

There will be no evasion of that summons. There will be no possibility, then, of a Substitute dying in your place. "Prepare to meet your God" will come to you, my Hearer, beyond all doubt. Oh, how I wish that you were prepared for it! You must assuredly meet your God whom you have forgotten all these years--your Creator, whose rights you have ignored. Your Preserver, to Whom you have rendered no kind of recompense. Your King, whose name it may be you have blasphemed. You have denied His existence, but you will meet Him. You have lived in open revolt against His righteous Laws, but you will certainly meet Him. No exemption will be possible. Before His judgment seat you must stand.

Prepared or unprepared at the sound of the resurrection trumpet, you must appear at His bar. No words of mine, however terrible they may be, can by any possibility equal the horror which the judgment to come and the wrath to be measured out will cause to the unregenerate heart. We are sometimes accused, my Brethren, of using language too harsh, too ghastly, too alarming, with regard to the world to come. But we shall not soon change our note, for we solemnly believe that if we could speak thunderbolts, and our every look were a lightning flash--and if our eyes dropped blood instead of tears--no tones, words, gestures, or likenesses of dread could exaggerate the awful condition of a soul which has refused the Gospel and is delivered over to Justice.

"He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense,

says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Remember His own words, "Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver" (Psa. 50:22).

Certain prophets of smooth things rise up among us, deluding the people with thoughts that the judgment to come will not be terrible, but will end in eternal sleep. Into their secret my soul comes not. I must speak the Master's Truth and the Master's Words. O you ungodly, your punishment will not end, for He has said it, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Your miseries shall have no cessation, for He who cannot lie, declares, "The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." From the lips of Jesus at the Day of Judgment you shall receive the sentence of everlasting blessedness or everlasting punishment, and no other.

May God grant that you may not dare to sin under the notion that your sin is a mere trifle, for both you and it will soon cease to be. Nature itself teaches you that your soul will exist forever. O make it not forever a ruin! Bring not upon

yourself everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power! Thus have you rung the changes on the tones of these words, and I leave them with you.

II. Secondly, and very briefly. There are HEAVY TIDINGS in these words. Heavy tidings for the ungodly, for thus they run--"Prepare to meet your God." I wish I could take hold of every unbeliever here, of every man and woman whose heart is not right with God, and personally speak to them, just as of old the Prophet spoke to Jeroboam's wife, and said, "I have heavy tidings from the Lord for you." So would I speak to them, "I have heavy tidings, unconverted Friends, from the Lord for you." And the tidings are these, "You will before long have to meet your God.

Listen to the words, "meet your God."

You have by some means passed through this world without meeting Him. He is everywhere, but you have managed not to see Him. He has fed you, and in Him you have lived and moved, and had your being. But you have contrived so to stultify yourself that you have never yet perceived Him. You will perceive Him soon. When the flesh shall fall off from your spirit, your disembodied soul will see without these eyes far more clearly than it now does--for you will begin to see the spiritual world which is now hidden from you--and chief and foremost you will meet your God.

Now you say in your heart "no God," because the thought of God is objectionable to you. You could not sin as you do if you remembered that the all-seeing eye is in the chamber, no, is in your heart itself. Remember you will not be able soon to shake off the thought of God, for you will meet Him face to face. Not the thought of God only, but the actual Being of God will confront you in your dying hour. You will be compelled to meet Him. It will be a close meeting, not as though He looked upon you from afar, or you surveyed Him from a distance. But you will so meet Him that all the Glory of His majesty will operate upon you like the fire which devours the stubble--for our God is a consuming fire.

His holiness will become wrath against your sin, not wrath treasured up and removed far away, but wrath that shall come near to you to consume you. It will be an inevitable meeting, from which you will not be able to escape. From your fellow creature, whom you do not wish to see, you readily withdraw yourself, but you cannot escape from God. The rays of the morning's sun could not carry you so fast as the Lord's right hand can move. The uttermost parts of the sea cannot conceal you. The night shall be light about you. Neither the heights of Heaven, nor the depths

of Hell can conceal you from Him.

You must meet face to face with your God. And it must be a personal meeting. God and you will meet as if alone. God alone and you alone. What if there are angels? What if there are ten thousand times ten thousands of your kindred sinners? To you, virtually, it shall be solitude itself. You must meet your God! You, YOU! O my dear Hearer, it is a sad thing that this should be heavy tidings to you, for if you were what you should be, it would be joy to you to think that you shall be near your God, and dwell in His embrace. But, unconverted as you are, no tidings can have more of horror in them than these--that you, do as you will, and steel your heart as you may--must by-and-by confront your God.

Think awhile upon Who it is that you have to meet! You must meet your God--your God! That is, offended Justice you must meet whose laws you have broken, whose penalties you have ridiculed. Justice righteously indignant with its sword drawn you must confront. You must meet your God. That is, you must be examined, by unblind Omniscience. He who has seen your heart, and read your thoughts, and jotted down your affections, and remembered your idle words-- you must meet Him. And infinite discernment you must meet--those eyes that never yet were duped. The God who will see through the veils of hypocrisy and all the concealments of formality.

There will be no making yourself out to be better than you are before Him. You must meet Him who will read you as a man reads a book open before his eyes. You mast meet with unsullied holiness. You have not always found yourself happy on earth when you have been with holy men--you could not act out your natural impulses in their presence, they were a check upon you. But the infinitely holy God, what must it be to meet Him? It will be such an interview for a sinner to meet with

the thrice holy God as for dross to meet with the refiner's fire or stubble with the flame.

You will have, moreover, to meet with insulted Mercy, and perhaps this will be the most dreadful meeting of the whole--when your conscience will remind you that you were invited to repent, that you were urged to lay hold of Christ, that you were honestly bid to be saved--but you hardened your neck and would not be persuaded. O Sinner, by so much as God is patient with you now, by so much will He be angry with you then. They who slight the warnings of His Divine Grace shall feel the terrors of His wrath. To none shall it be so hard to meet God in justice as to those who would not

meet Him in Grace--vengeance takes the place of slighted mercy. God grant you may never know what it is to meet insulted love, rejected mercy, and tenderness turned to wrath!

O Sinner, if you have to meet your God as you now are, you will find Him everlasting Truth, fulfilling every threatening Word of His Law and Gospel. Every black Word that is in this Book shall be fulfilled over your head, and every dreadful syllable be verified in your loins and in your heart. Remember too, that you will meet with Him who has Omnipotent power--against whom you can no more contend than the smoke against the wind, or the fuel against the furnace. You shall then know how God can punish, and you will find Him not a weak and trembling God, but an Omnipotent God, putting forth His power to destroy His adversaries who have dared to assail against His majesty.

Thus have I put a few thoughts together, in very feeble language, I confess, but they ought, of themselves, apart from mere words, to have power with you. I pray God the Holy Spirit that you, dear Hearer, may prepare to meet your God. You see who it is you have to meet, and what it will be to meet Him. May God make you to be prepared for what must

occur.

III. The last point is this. Here is A WEIGHTY PRECEPT--prepare to meet God. How can a man be prepared to meet God? In the text there is an allusion to preparing for battle, but none of you would wish to contend with God in the hereafter. Who is he that thinks that with a thousand he can meet one that comes against him with a countless host of ten thousand times ten thousand? O Rebel, the warfare is hopeless, ground your arms. It were worse than madness to dream of contending with God. Submit, for resistance is vain.

Better far is it to prepare to meet God as sinners. We are today like prisoners who are waiting for our court date, and the news has come that the judge is ready, and we, the prisoners, are to prepare to meet him. Sooner or later it must be the lot of us all to come before the Judge. Now, Brethren, what is the right way to prepare to meet a judge? If any of you can plead, "Not guilty," your preparation is made. But there is not one man among us who dares think of that. We have sinned, great God, and we confess the sin. What preparation, then, can we make? Suppose we sit down and investigate our case. Can we plead extenuations? Can we urge excuses or mitigations, or hope to escape by promises of future improvement?

Let us give up the attempt, my Brethren. We have gone astray willfully and wickedly--and we shall do it again--it is of no use for us to set up any kind of defense that is grounded upon ourselves. How, then, can we be prepared to meet our God? Hearken. There is an Advocate, and it is written, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Let us send for Him. We poor prisoners, lying waiting in the cells, send for Jesus, the Son of God, to be our Intercessor and Advocate. Will He undertake our cause? O that He would plead the cause of our souls, and be our Daysman to speak with God on

our behalf!

Yes! He will accept the office, and be our Advocate, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Then let us apply to Him, and say, "Jesus, undertake our case." Will you not do this? Oh, I pray God you may! Sitting in these pews, you may engage the services of the great Advocate. Cry in your hearts, "Son of David, undertake for me, undertake my case." Well, now, supposing we have put it all into His hands, and He who is called Wonderful is received as our Counselor to plead for us. What is next to be done?

First He bids us prepare to meet our God by at once taking up our true position as sinners. Let us plead guilty. Let us make a full and penitent confession. We cannot be saved by Christ unless we will do as He bids us. Faith is only real as it is obedient. One of the first Gospel exhortations which Jesus gives us is this, that we confess our sins. O that we may honestly plead guilty, for our iniquity stares us in the face, and we ought heartily to make acknowledgment of it--for it is an evil and a bitter thing--and has worked us woeful damage. O great Counselor, if You bid us plead guilty, we do so with many tears and with broken hearts. We do confess that all our hope must lie in Divine mercy, for we have no merit. Lost and undone, we cry, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

But what next? Why then, the great Counselor will enter a plea for us, which will bar all further action against us. Though we have confessed that we are guilty, He knows how at the great Judgment Seat to plead a legal argument for the removal of all punishment. And what does He plead? Here is His argument, "My Father," says He, "I stood of old in the place of these who have committed their case to My hands, and who plead guilty at Your Judgment Seat. I suffered for their sins. I bore, that they might never bear, Your righteous ire. I satisfied Your Law on

their behalf. I claim, My Father, that they go free."

The infinite Majesty admits the plea. O Brothers and Sisters, if your case is in the hands of Christ, and you confess your guilt, do you not see how He sets you free so that you may be prepared to meet your God? Because you can plead the blood of Jesus, the Atonement of the great Substitute for sinners, and covered with that Substitution, you can stand accepted in the Beloved! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

But you have not heard the Counselor through yet, for as He goes on to speak before the infinite Majesty, He pleads, "My Father, I obeyed the Law on their behalf. I kept it in its very jots and tittles. I made it honorable, and now the righteousness which I achieved, I have made over unto them, for all that I am is theirs. My righteousness is their righteousness, and they shall stand accepted in the Beloved." The great Judge of all admits the fact, and He receives into His bosom and into His Glory poor souls who had sinned and pleaded guilty, but who now have imputed to them the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and are justified by faith which is in Him. All their iniquities are blotted out.

don't you see, dear Friends, what it is to be prepared to meet God! For now we have a good case, now we are not afraid of the last court session. Our case is in the hands of a blessed Advocate whose pleading must prevail. All that you and I have now to do is to prove by our actions that we really have believed in Christ. Let us go on to justify our faith if, indeed, our faith has justified us. Let us prove the sincerity of our confidence in Christ by the holiness of our lives, by the devotedness of those lives to His honor and glory. Let us wake up

all our powers and passions that we may become His servants to the highest extent and manhood's energy--living, laboring, working for Christ--because He has undertaken our case, and will save us at the last.

Thus have I set before you what it is to be prepared to meet God, in the hope that many here will make ready to meet Him. And now let me remind you that the subject on which I have spoken this morning may have a much nearer interest to some of you than you imagine. It has a very near interest to every one of us. It is but a matter of time, and all of us must appear at the Divine tribunal--but there are some to whom it may have a peculiarly close bearing. As I just told you, I did not select this subject, I had no idea of preaching from it--the subject selected me. I was dragged into this present line of thought. I am a pressed man in this service.

That sick young woman's necessities forced me to this subject. Why this special arrangement? I believe the reason is because there are some here this morning who are now receiving the last warning they will ever have. I am solemnly persuaded that I have among my hearers and readers some to whom this feeble word of mine is no other than an arrow from the bow of the Almighty God. To others it is a final message of mercy, and if this does not strike them, wound them, and drive them to Christ, nothing ever will.

From this day forth they shall feel no more stirrings of conscience, or strivings of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps before another Sunday's bell shall ring, some of you now listening to my voice will be in the land of spirits and have passed the solemn test--weighed in the balances and found wanting. If it is so, and it were hard for any man here to prophesy that it shall not be so, for where several thousands are met together, the very chances of mortality, as men call them, go to make

us fear it. The fact of this subject being thrust upon me makes me feel as though a Prophetic impulse were in it. Then, if it is so, you and I, whoever you may be, fated for death this week, stand in a peculiar relationship to each other.

1 may be gazing straight into those eyes which shall never look upon me again till we meet at the Judgment Bar, and if I am not faithful to your soul, you may rise up amidst that throng and say, "I strayed into that Tabernacle, and I listened to you, but you played with your theme, you were not earnest, and so I was lost." So then I will be earnest! I evoke you by the living God, escape from the wrath to come! As the Lord lives, there is but a step between you and death! Flee for your life! Look not behind you! Turn your whole soul to Jesus! A crucified Savior waits for a lost sinner, willing to receive him, willing to receive him now!

Now you can not look me in the face in the next world and say I did not speak to you earnestly. O that the glance which we exchange at this moment may be succeeded in that tremendous day by a glance of recognition in which there shall be the soft emotions of gratitude and affection, as you and I shall say to each other there, "Blessed be God that we met on that hallowed Sunday, for now we shall meet forever before the throne of Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forever more, and has the keys of Hell and of death." God bless you, every one of you, richly, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 16

Jesus Only

A Sermon

(No. 924)

Delivered on Lord's-Day Morning, April 3rd, 1870, by

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."--Matthew 17:8.

The last words will suffice us for a text, "Jesus only." When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elias, he exclaimed, "Master, it is good to be here," as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elias, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the law and the prophets; it might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see, but as an ordinary thing an ecstasy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples; and Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of heaven, we find that he with the rest became sore afraid. The best thing after all for Peter, was not the excessive strain of the transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting society of "Jesus only." Depend on it, brethren, that ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments, would not be so good for every day as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with "Jesus only," which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended

the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit, Moses and Elias being there also; and although Jesus Christ in his common habiliments and in his ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw his raiment bright as the light, and his face shining as the sun, yet he really was quite as glorious, and his company quite as beneficial. When they saw him in his everyday attire, his presence was quite as useful to them as when he robed himself in splendor. "Jesus only," is after all upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elias. "Jesus only," as the common Jesus, the Christ of every day, the man walking among men, communing in secret with his disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body, than the sight even of Jesus himself in the excellence of his majesty.

This morning, in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of "Jesus only," we shall hold it up as beyond measure important and delightful, and shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," so may it be said of fellowship with "Jesus only." We shall first notice what might have happened to the disciples after the transfiguration; we shall then dwell on what did happen; and then, thirdly, we shall speak on what we anxiously desire may happen to those who hear us this day.

I. First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration.

There were four things, either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, they might have seen nobody with them on the holy mount; they might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sore afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air; no Moses,

no Elias, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away; like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes. They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no teacher left them. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon; not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd; for they would have had no champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no wise man, who spake as never man spake, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy. They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan children left alone in the world. They would henceforth have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the transfiguration; because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations, all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left no solid residuum behind. Alas! For those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits, and then have found themselves alone, and all the high companionship forever gone.

My dear brethren and sisters, there are some in this world and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a gospel ordinance, or in reading the word of God, for a while delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the sublimer regions, and then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment

enjoyed, nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of every-day life. The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses not Elias, nor Jesus left. You did remember what you saw, but only with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the gospel and perceives not its reality; it listens with respect to gospel histories as to legends of ancient times; it hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles; it venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds, but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, any thing for to-day, for common life, and for common men. Moses it knows, and Elias it knows, and Christ it knows, as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared, but it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in permanent influence over the mind and the spirit of the present. All come and all gone, all to be reverenced, all to be respected, but nothing more; there is nothing left, so far as they are concerned, to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and his gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly recollect the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century; we have got beyond all that. Ah! Brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual phantoms; to us it would be wretchedness itself. We, on the other hand, say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day he is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world. Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By his Spirit he is actually in his church; we have seen him, though not with eyes; we have heard him, though not with

ears; we have grasped him, though not with hands; and we feed upon his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our friend, to whom we make known our secrets, and who beareth all our sorrows. We have Jesus our interpreting instructor, who still reveals his secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in his power we still are mighty. We confess his reigning sovereignty in the church, and we receive his all-sufficient succors. The church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her; Jesus is no myth to us, whatever he may be to others; he is no departed shade, he is no heroic personification: in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see him not, and even we with these eyes see him not, yet in him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision; but may our religion be a matter of fact, a walking with the living and abiding Saviour. Though Moses may be gone, and Elias may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abideth with us and in us, and we in him, and so shall it be evermore.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes they might have seen Moses only. It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen Moses only. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for man of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun, who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the moon? Who would

exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the law for the sunny rays of the Saviour's divine affection? It would have been an unhappy exchange for them to have lost their Master whose name is love, and to have found a leader in the man whose name is synonymous with law. Moses, the man of God, cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet dear brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the gospel preaching that there has been in the world, and the declaration of the precious doctrines of grace every Sabbath day; after the clear revelations of Scripture, and the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts; yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this, there are some who will see nothing but shadows still, mere shadows still. As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures, for they remain instructive to me; but the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone forever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently, and they set up a new system of types and shadows--a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances; they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonial, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night. They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not "Jesus only," but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas! for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah! unhappy change for the

heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations. It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian church if she could ever be duped out of the priceless boons which faith wins from her living Lord in his fullness of grace and truth, to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant gospel fact and substance. Blessed be God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible, or hear the Gospel, feel nothing except a sense of their own sinfulness, and, arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the law of God, they feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses, may the stern voice of the lawgiver drive them to the lawfulfiller; but I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The sight of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with thunder his fiery law, what is there here to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary, where love makes recompense to justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might be touched, and come to Calvary, where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the throne. Oh how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threatening and come to the blood of sprinkling, where "Jesus only" speaketh better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty, and confess how short you have fallen of it, and therefore you abide under conscious condemnation, and will not come to him who is the propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threatening, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood. They see the dark shadow of Moses only; the broken tablets of the law, the smoking mount, and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now; for now and then under the preaching of the gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy, but they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair, because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dream, and that yet like the apostles they may see "Jesus only." But, my brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples, they might have seen Elijah only. Instead of the gentle Saviour, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elias. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God's own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I wot that if John had said, "Command fire from heaven," Elias would have consumed his foes; the Pharisees, like the priests of Baal, would have found a speedy end; Herod's blood, like Ahab's, would have been licked up by dogs; and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious omnipotence of the Friend of sinners.

Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Saviour of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel, but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus we are at Elim beneath the palm tree, but with Elias we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper. Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elias only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elias may be taken representatively as the preparer of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the prophecy of the coming of Elias as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state, and come not to "Jesus only." I am not myself fond of even using the term "preparing for Christ," for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared; but there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith--a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin, all these are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus, and oh! How many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would fain have Christ, but they stay in desire and longing and go no further. They never get so far as to behold "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." The voice from heaven to them they always interpret as crying, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees; bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again, by the voice that crieth in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah's challenge, "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if

Baal, then follow him;" but they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elias and not rejoicing before the Saviour. Unhappy men and women, so near the kingdom, and yet out of it; so near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The word is near you(ah, how near!), and yet you receive it not. Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Saviour is not to be saved; that to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of heaven did never hang; Elias is not the door of salvation; preparation for Christ is not Christ, despair is not regeneration, doubt is not repentance. Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved, but complaining of yourselves is not faith. "Jesus only" is the way, the truth, and the life. "Jesus only" is the sinner's Saviour. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elias, not to see Moses, but to see "Jesus only." You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another: a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes--they might have seen Moses and Elias with Jesus, even as in the transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio, how great a privilege! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the divine purposes! Moses could preach the law and make men tremble, and then Jesus could follow with his gospel of grace and truth. Elias could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humble spirits. Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiriting? Would not the assemblage of such divers kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success? I think not. It is a vastly better thing to see "Jesus only," as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses

and Elias with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning cometh, I know it cometh, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the full day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star; all those guardians and comforters of the night have disappeared; I see the sun only. Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the moon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elias, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses? The ceremonials are all fulfilled in Jesus; the law is honored and fulfilled in him. Let Moses go, his light is already in "Jesus only." And why should I wish to retain Elias? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the preparation of which Elias preached Jesus brings with himself. Let, then, Elias go, his light also is in "Jesus only." It is better to see Moses and Elias in Christ, than to see Moses and Elias with Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie's English Grammar, or a Mavor's Spelling Book, or a Henry's First Latin Exercises, nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian wants not the symbols of Moses, or the preparations of Elias, for Christ is all, and we are complete in him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ's heart, may safely lay the legal school-book by; this was good enough for the church's infancy, but we have now put away childish things. "We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons,

God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." My brethren, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realized in heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise; but when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in heaven. We delight in our Sabbaths, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sabbaths! but when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sabbath. No temple, because all temple; and no Sabbath day, because all Sabbath in heaven. Thus, you see, the losing of some things is gain: it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its appurtenances, and never regret it because we have become men, so do Moses and Elias pass away, but we do not miss them, for "Jesus only" indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see Jesus only. My brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life. Do you remember when you were first of all convinced and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the gospel! But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master, you see no man save "Jesus only." And as you grow in grace you will find that many doctrines and points of church government which once appeared to you to be all important, though you will still value them, will seem but of small consequence

compared with Christ himself. Like the traveller ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc; at first he observes that lord of the hills as one born among many, and often in the twistings of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains; but when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mount Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, but Christ must increase; until he alone fills the full horizon of your soul, and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very heaven of God. O that we may thus see "Jesus only!"

II. Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon WHAT REALLY HAPPENED. "They saw no man, save Jesus only." This was all they wanted to see for their comfort. They were sore afraid: Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort; Elias was gone, he could speak no consolatory word; yet when Jesus said, "Be not afraid," their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elias, neither to the old covenant, not to prophecy: go straight away to Jesus only. He was all the Saviour they wanted. Those three men all needed washing from sin; all needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elias could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. But Jesus only could cleanse them, and did; Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah! brethren, all the Saviour we want, we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us their services. How glad they would be if we would bend our necks once again to their yoke! But we thank God we have seen "Jesus only," and if Moses has

gone, and if Elias has gone, we are not likely to let the shavelings of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. "Jesus only," is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priestcraft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world, enough for a Master. "No man can serve two masters," and albeit, Moses and Elias might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower's mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus, his guidance, his direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their captain; in the day of difficulty, enough for their direction.

They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my brethren, we have no Master but Christ; we submit ourselves to no vicar of God; we bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield, "One is our Master," and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as their power for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elias to bring them fire from heaven: Jesus would give them of his Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the gospel, and to conquer souls to the truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred State prestige, no pretended apostolical succession, no prelatical unction; Jesus will anoint you with his Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. "Jesus only." Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a one as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect, and it must

conquer the sanctified affections. Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens, and came down and suffered shame and ignominy, that he might redeem us from the wrath to come; let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head, and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffer's fists; let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes, and the love of Christ must constrain us, and we shall thus "judge, that if one died for all, then were wll dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." In the point of motive, believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished, will but little strengthen you, nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities. It will be enough to you that you serve the Lord Christ; it suffices you if you may be enabled to honor him, to deck his crown, to magnify his name. Here is a stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors, "Jesus only." Brethren, it is all the gospel we have to preach--it is all the gospel we want to preach--it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves; it is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overweening desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep, and novel; and we are often informed that there are to be developments in religion, even as in science; and we are despised as being hardly men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach today what was preached two hundred years ago. Brethren, we preach to-day what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations, they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the

old truth of Christ alone is everlasting; all else has gone or shall go, but the gospel towers above the wrecks of time: to us "Jesus only" remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else. For "Jesus only" shall be our reward, to be with him where he is, to behold his glory, to be like him when we shall see him as he is, we ask no other heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant that we may have a fullness of this, and "Jesus only" shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have rather given you the heads of thought, than the thoughts themselves. Though the apostles saw "Jesus only," they saw quite sufficient, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

III. I must close, though I fain would linger. Brethren, let us think of WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN to all now present.

I do desire for my fellow Christians and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be "Jesus only." I believe that whenever our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health; but I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments right, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only. Other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most

inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. In fine, I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that any thing which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the religion of the perfect, the more completely every thing else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian.

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see "Jesus only." "Oh," saith one, "Sir, I want to see my sins. My heart is very hard, and very proud; I want to see my sins." Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humiliation of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Saviour. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on yourself, and you have been trying to feel their weight, but there is a happier and better view still. Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made him to be covered with a bloody sweat; it nailed him to the cross; it made him cry, "Lama Sabachthani;" it bowed him into the dust of death. Why, friend, if you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening yourself, see Jesus only, and the best kind of repentance will follow. "Ah, but," saith another, "I want to feel my need of Christ more." You will see your need all the better

if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller's shop, because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it. So often is it with some of you about other matters, so that it becomes most dangerous to let you see, because you want as soon as you see. A sight of Jesus, of what he is to sinners, of what he makes sinners, of what he is in himself, will more tend to make you feel your need of him than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to "Jesus only." "Ay," saith another, "but I want to read my title clear, I want to know that I have an interest in Jesus." you will best read your interest in Christ, by looking at him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I have a right to it? But I look into the archives of the estate, I search testaments and covenants. Now, Christ Jesus is God's covenant with the people, a leader and commander to the people. To-day, I personally can read my title clear to heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it? Not because I feel all I wish to feel, nor because I am what I hope I yet shall be, but I read in the word that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Saviour, then thou hast come to save such as I am. Then I see it written again, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." I have believed, and have been baptized; I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing. As surely then as there is a God in heaven I shall be in heaven one day. It must be so, because unless God be a liar, he that believeth must be saved. You see it is not by looking within, it is by looking to Jesus only that you perceive at last your name graven on his hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my

heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at his heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eye away from your sin and your emptiness to his righteousness and his fullness. See the sweat drops bloody as they fall in Gethsemane, see his heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary! There is life in a look at him! O look to him, and though it be Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elias should alarm you, yet "Jesus only" shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you. May God grant us grace every one of us to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, "Jesus only." May God bless you for the sake of "Jesus only." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON--Matthew 17.

Chapter 17

Individual Sin Laid On Jesus

(No. 925)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6.

I THINK I addressed you from this text four years ago, ("Sin Laid on Jesus," No. 694, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit), but I feel quite safe in returning to it, for we shall never exhaust it. It is a verse so wealthy in meaning that if I had, during the whole four years, dilated upon it every Sunday, it would be my fault if the theme were stale. On this occasion I desire mainly to draw attention to a part of the text upon which little was said on the former occasion. The vine is the same, but we shall gather clusters from a bough ungleaned before. The jewels are the same, but we will place them in another light and view them from another angle. May God grant that some who derived no comfort from our former word may be led to find peace and salvation in Christ this morning. The Lord in His infinite mercy grant it may be so.

I shall first give a general exposition of the text. Then in the second place I shall dwell upon the special doctrine which I wish to teach. And then, thirdly, we shall draw from that special doctrine a special lesson.

I. First, we will GIVE A GENERAL EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The text naturally

breaks itself up into these three heads--a confession general to all penitents--"All we like sheep have gone astray." A personal confession peculiar to each one, "We have turned, every one to his own way." And then, the august doctrine of Substitution, which is the very soul and spirit of the entire Gospel, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Our exposition, then, begins with the confession which is universal to all penitents--it is acknowledged here by the persons speaking who call themselves "all we"--that they all had, like sheep, broken the hedge of God's Law, forsaken their good and ever blessed Shepherd, and wandered into paths perilous and pernicious. A comparison is here used, and its use shows that the confession was a thoughtful one and not a matter of careless form. Man is here compared to a beast--for sin brings out the animal part of us. And while holiness allies us to angels--sin degrades us to brutes. We are not likened to one of the more noble and intelligent animals, but to a silly sheep.

All sin is folly. All sinners are fools. Sheep are dishonored by the comparison here used, for with all their silliness they have never been known to rush into the fire after having felt the flame. You will observe that the creature selected for comparison is one that cannot live without care and attention. There is no such thing as a wild sheep. There could not long be sheep unless they were tended and cared for by a shepherd. The creature's happiness, its safety and very existence, all depend upon its being under a nurture and care far above its own. Yet for all that, the sheep strays from the shepherd. Man's happiness lies in being under the direction of the Lord, in being obedient to God, in being in communion with God. Departure from God is death to all his highest interests, destruction to all his best prospects. Yet for all that, as the sheep goes astray, even so does

man.

The sheep is a creature exceedingly quick-witted upon the one matter of going astray. If there is but one gap in the hedge, the sheep will find it. If there is but one possibility out of five hundred that by any means the flock shall wander, one of the flock will be quite certain to discover that possibility--and all its companions will avail themselves of it. So is it with man. He is quick of understanding for evil things. God made man upright, but he has sought out many inven-tions--the inventions being all to destroy his own uprightness and to do despise to the Law of God. And that very creature which is so quick-witted to wander is the least likely of all animals to return.

The ox knows its owner, and the ass knows its master's crib. Even the swine that will wander by day will return to the trough by night, and the dog will scent out his master over many a mile. But not so the sheep. Sharp as it is to discover opportunities for going astray, it seems to be bereft of all wit or will to come back to the fold. And such is man--

wise to do evil--but foolish towards that which is good. With a hundred eyes, like Argus, he searches out opportunities for sinning. But, like Bartimeus, he is stone blind as to repentance and a return to God.

The sheep goes astray, it is said, all the more frequently when it is most dangerous for it to do so. Propensities to stray seem to be developed in the very proportion in which they ought to be subdued. Whereas in our own land a sheep might wander with some safety, it wanders less in the Oriental plains, where for it to go astray is to run risks from leopards and wolves. Those very men who ought to be most careful, and who are placed in positions where it is best for them to be scrupulous, are those who are most prone to follow after evil--and with heedless carelessness to leave the way of

Truth.

The sheep goes astray ungratefully. It owes everything to the shepherd, and yet forsakes the hand that feeds it and heals its diseases. The sheep goes astray repeatedly. If restored today it may not stray today if it cannot, but it will tomorrow if it can. The sheep wanders further and further, from bad to worse. It is not content with the distance it has reached, it will go yet greater lengths. There is no limit to its wandering except its weakness. Do you not see you own selves, my Brethren, as in a mirror? From Him that has blessed you, you have gone astray. To Him you owe your all, and yet from Him you continually depart. Your sins are not occasional--they are constant. Your wanderings are not slight, but you wander further and further--and were it not for restraining Grace which has prevented your footsteps--you would have wandered even now to the utmost extremities of guilt and utterly destroyed your souls.

"All we like sheep have gone astray." What? Is there not one faithful soul? Alas, no! "There is none that does good, no, not one." Search the ranks of the blessed in Heaven and there is not one saint before the Throne who will boast that when on earth he never sinned. Search the Church of God below and there is not one, however closely he walks with God, but must confess that he has erred and strayed from God's ways like a lost sheep. Vain is the man who refuses to confess this--for his hypocrisy or his pride, whichever may be the cause of such a base lie--proves that he is not one of God's chosen. The chosen of God unanimously, mournfully, but heartily take up this cry, "All we like sheep have gone astray." A general confession, then, is uttered in our text.

This confession by the mass is backed up by a personal acknowledgment from each one, "We have turned, every one to his own way." Sin is

general but yet special. All are sinners, but each one is a sinner with an emphasis. No man has of himself turned to God's way, but in every case each one has chosen "his own way." The very gist of sin lies in our setting up our own way in opposition to the way and will of God. We have all done so, we have all aspired to be our own masters, we have all desired to follow our own inclinations and have not submitted ourselves to the will of God.

The text implies that each man has his own peculiarity and special sin. All are diseased, but not all precisely with the same form of disease.

It is well, my Brothers and Sisters, if each of us, in examining himself, has found out what is his own peculiar transgression. It is well to know what evil weeds flourish most readily in the soil of our heart--what wild beast that is most native to the forests of our soul. Many have felt that their peculiar sin was so remarkably evil and so surpassingly vile that it separated them altogether from the common rank of sinners. They felt that their iniquities were unique, and like lone peaks, lifted themselves defiantly towards the pure heavens of God provoking the fiercest thunderbolts of wrath. Such persons have almost been driven to despair under the belief that they were peculiarly great sinners--as Paul puts it--the very chief of sinners.

I should not wonder if this feeling which each one imagines to be peculiar to himself may have come over very many of us, and the shadow of despair may for awhile have fallen upon very many of us. It is no unusual thing for an awakened conscience to feel its own sinfulness to be above measure and parallel, the worst that has ever defiled mankind. This special sin happens to be the point to which I desire to call to your attention. I wish to show that the atoning sacrifice of Christ not only applies to sin in general, since "all we like sheep have gone astray," but applies to special sin, for "we have turned, every one to

his own way."

I pass over it slightly now and introduce you further in the exposition of the text, to what I called the august doctrine of the Substitution of Christ, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." We have seen the confession of sin made by the mass. We lightly touched the peculiar confession made by each awakened individual--put all these together and you see a mass of sin--did I say you see it? It is a mass of sin too great to be beheld by the human understanding--an enormous load of iniquity against God. What is to be done with the offenders? The only thing that can be done with them, in the ordinary rule of justice, is to punish them for their offenses. And that punishment must be such as was threatened--indignation, wrath, destruction, death.

That God should punish sin is not a matter of impulse with Him. It was not with Him an alternative as to whether He might or might not punish sin. We speak always with holy awe when we speak of anything concerning Him, but with reverence we say it was not possible that God should wink at the iniquity of man. It was not possible that He should treat it with indifference. His attribute of Justice, which is as undoubtedly a part of His Glory as His attribute of Love, required that sin should be punished. Moreover, as God had been pleased to make a moral universe to be governed by laws, there would be an end of all government if the breaking of those laws involved no penalty whatever.

If, after the great King of all the earth had promulgated a Law, with certain penalties annexed to the breach of it, He did not cause those penalties to be exacted, there would be an end to the whole system of His government. The foundations would be removed. And if the foundations are removed, what shall the righteous do? It is infinitely benevolent of God, I will venture to say, to cast evil men into Hell.

If that is thought to be a hard and strange statement, I reply that inasmuch as there is sin in the world, it is no benevolence to tolerate so great an evil. It is the highest benevolence to do all that can be done to restrain the horrible pest.

It would be far from benevolent for our government to throw wide the doors of all the jails, to abolish the office of the judge, to suffer every thief and every offender of every kind to go unpunished. Instead of mercy it would be cruelty. It might be mercy to the offender, but it would be intolerable injustice towards the upright and inoffensive.

God's very benevolence demands that the detestable rebellion of sin against His supreme authority should be put down with a firm hand, that men may not flatter themselves that they can do evil and yet go unpunished. The necessities of moral government require that sin must be punished. The effeminate and sentimental talkers of this boastful age represent God as though He had no attribute but that of gentleness, no virtue but that of indifference to evil.

But the God of the Bible is glorious in holiness! He will by no means spare the guilty. At His bar every transgression is meted out its just recompense or reward. Even in the New Testament, where stands that golden sentence, "God is Love," His other attributes are by no means cast into the shade. Read the burning words of Peter, or James, or Jude, and see how the God of Sabaoth abhors evil! As the God who must do right, the Lord cannot shut His eyes to the iniquities of man. He must visit transgression with its punishment. He has done it, has done it terribly, and He will continue to do it. Even to all eternity He will show Himself the God that hates iniquity and sin.

What, then, is to become of man? "All we like sheep have gone astray." Sin must be punished. What, then, can become of us? Infinite Love has devised the expedient of representation and substitution. I call it an

expedient, for we can only use the language of men. You remember, Brothers and Sisters, that you and I fell originally from our first estate by no act of our own--we, all of us, fell in the first Adam's transgression. Now, had we fallen individually and personally, in the first place, apart from another, it may be that our fall would have been hopeless. As the fall of the apostate angels, who having sinned one by one and not representatively, are reserved in chains of darkness forever under the condemnation and wrath of God--so might we have been. But inasmuch as the first fountain of evil came to us through our parent, Adam, there remained for God a loophole through which His Divine love might enter without violation of Justice. The principle of representation wrecked us-- the same principle of representation rescues us. Jesus Christ the Son of God becomes a Man and re-heads the race. He becomes the second Adam, obeys the Law of God, bears the penalty of sin, and now stands as the Head of all those who are in Him! And who are these but such as repent of sin and put their trust in Him? These get out of the old headship of the first Adam where they fell, and through the atoning sacrifice are cleansed from all personal guilt, brought into union with the second Adam, and stand again in Him, abiding forever in acceptance and felicity!

See, then, how it is that God has been pleased to deliver His people. It has been through carrying out a principle with which the very system of the universe commenced, namely, that of representation. I repeat it, had we been always and altogether separate units, there might have been no possibility of our salvation. But though every man sins separately, and the second clause of our text confesses that fact, yet we all sin in connection with others. For instance, who shall deny that each man receives propensities to sin from his parents, and that we transmit peculiarities of sin to our own children?

We stand in connection with race, and there are sins of races peculiar to races and to nationalities. We are never put on a probation of entire separation--we always stand in connection with others, and God has availed Himself of this,

which I called a loophole, to bring in salvation for us by virtue of our union with another Man, who is also more than Man--the Son of God and yet the son of Mary--the Infinite who once became an Infant. The Eternal who lived, and bled, and died as the representative of all who put their trust in Him.

Now you will say, perhaps, that still, albeit this might have been at the bottom of the whole system of moral government, you do not quite see the justice of it. The reply to that remark is this--if God sees the justice of it you ought to be content with it. He was against whom every sin was aimed. And if He pleased to gather up the whole bundle of the sin of His people and say to His Beloved Son, "I will visit You for all these," and if Jesus, our Representative, joyously consented to bear our sins as our Representative--who are you and who am I that we should enter any caveat against what God the infinitely just One consents to accept?

The text does not say that our sins were laid on Christ Jesus by accident, but, "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." We sing sometimes, "I lay my sins on Jesus." That is a very sweet act of faith, but at the bottom of it there is another laying, namely, that act in which it pleased the Lord to lay our sins on Jesus. Apart from the Lord's doing it, our sins could never have been transferred to the Redeemer. The Lord is so just that we dare not think of examining His verdicts. He is so infinitely pure and holy that what He does we accept as being necessarily right. And inasmuch as we derive such blessed results from the Divine plan of Substitution, far be it from us to

raise any question concerning it!

Jesus was accepted as the natural Substitute and Representative of all those who trust Him, and all the sins of these were laid on Him so that they were freed from guilt. Jesus was regarded as if all these sins were His sins. He was punished as if these were His sins. He was put to shame, forsaken of God, and delivered to death as if He had been a sinner. And thus, through Divine Grace, those who actually committed the sins are permitted to go free. They have satisfied justice through the sufferings of their Substitute.

Beloved Brethren, the most fit Person to be a Substitute for us was Christ Jesus. And why? Because He had been pleased to take us, His people, into union with Himself. If He were our Head, and He had made us to be members of His Body, who more fit to suffer for the body than the Head? If He had, and Scripture tells us so, entered into a mysterious conjugal union with us, who more fit to suffer for the spouse than her Husband? Christ is Man, therefore His fitness and adaptation to be a Substitute for man. The creature that sins must be the creature that suffers--man breaks God's Law--and man must honor it. As by man came death, by Man also must come the resurrection from the dead--and Jesus Christ was undoubtedly Man of the substance of His mother.

He was fit to be our Substitute because He was a pure Man. He had no offense in Him. Neither Satan, nor the more searching eye of God could find any evil in Him. He was under no obligation to the Law except as He put Himself under the Law. He owed nothing to the great moral Governor until He voluntarily became a subject of His moral government on our behalf. Therefore, being without obligation Himself--having no debts of His own--He was fit to take upon Himself our liabilities. And as He was under no obligations for Himself, He was a fitting One to

become under obligations for us.

Moreover, He did all this voluntarily, and His fitness much lies here. If a substitute should be dragged to death for us unwillingly, if such could be the case, an injustice would be perpetrated in the very act. But Jesus Christ, taking up His Cross, and going forth willingly to suffer for us, proved His fitness to redeem us. Once more--His being God as well as Man, gave the strength to suffer--gave Him the power to stoop. If He had not been so lofty as to be Fellow with the eternal God, He would not have stooped so low as to redeem us, but --

"From the highest Throne in Glory To the Cross of deepest woe,"

was such a descent that there was an infinite merit in it. When He stooped, even to the grave itself, there was an infinite merit by which Justice was satisfied, the Law was vindicated, and those for whom He died were effectually saved.

I do not want to proceed to the other point until everyone here has got the thought, and grasped it, and received it. We have gone astray, but the straying of as many of us as believe, were laid on Christ. We have each chosen our own way of sin, but those sins are not ours now--they are laid on our great Substitute--if we are trusting in Him. He has paid to the utmost farthing all the debt of those sins. He has borne the fullness of Divine wrath, and there is no wrath against us. Just as the bullock was laid on the altar to be burnt, God's wrath came like consuming fire and burnt the bullock, and

there was no fire left. So when the wrath of God fell on Christ, it consumed Him, and there was no fire left, no wrath left--it spent itself.

God has no anger against a soul that believes in Jesus. Neither has that soul any sin, for its sin has been laid on Christ, and it cannot be in two places at once--Christ has carried it and the sin has ceased

to be. The believing soul, though in itself as black as Hell, is now as bright as Christ Himself when He was transfigured, for Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Thus we conclude our general exposition of the verse.

II. I now desire for a short time, but with all the earnestness of my soul, to dwell on THE SPECIAL DOCTRINE taught in the central clause of the text--"We have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Each man and each woman, from a natural difference of constitution, from the variations in education, and from the diversities of circumstances, has sinned somewhat differently from every other. Two brothers educated by the same parents will yet display diversities of transgression. No man treads exactly in the same footsteps as another, and some take roads which, though equally wrong, are diametrically opposite. One turns to the right hand, and another to the left, both equally renouncing the onward path.

Now, the glory of the text that I want to bring out is this--that if you believe in Jesus Christ, this special sin of yours was laid on Him, as well as all those other sins in which you stand on an equality with your fellow men. There was a publican--he had been a common, gross offender--rough and harsh to his brother Jews in demanding an inordinate tax. He was a man of low habits, indulging in drunkenness, fornication, and other defilements. Yet when that publican went up to the house of God and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," the Atonement just met the publican's iniquity, and exactly took away the publican's transgression.

But, on the other hand, there was a Pharisee--the opposite of the publican--proud and self-righteous, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God. He considered himself to be in all things better than other men. But remember that when he fell off his horse as he was

riding to Damascus, and heard a voice that said, "Why do you persecute Me?" that very same Pharisee said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." There was in Christ precisely that which met the Pharisee's sin. In our Lord's day there were Sadducees, too--that is, men who said there was neither angel nor spirit They were infidels, skeptics, free-thinkers--your Broad Church sinners.

Now these men neither went into coarse transgression with the publican nor into superstition with the Pharisee, but they had their direct antagonism to the Truth of God. And I doubt not cases occurred to prove that in the pardoning blood of Christ the Sadducee's case was met. No matter in what peculiar direction any one of the Lord's sheep has gone astray, the Lord has laid that particular straying upon the Savior.

I want to speak, now, so as to fetch forth some individuals here this morning. It may be that one here today is saying, "I sinned against an early Christian training. No one ever had a better mother or a more tender father. I knew the Word of God, like Timothy, from my youth--but I did despite to all this teaching and sinned with aggravation of infamy. I sinned against the clearest light."

Brothers and Sisters, your sin is very great, but the Lord has laid on Jesus your iniquity. Look to the Cross, and see it laid there. "Yes," says another, "but I have had the strivings of God's Spirit. In addition to an early Christian education, I have sat under an earnest Gospel ministry. I have often been impressed. I have been driven to my chamber to pray, but I have quenched the holy emotions, and have continued in sin." O guilty One, the Lord has laid on His dear Son your iniquity! Can you look to Jesus now and trust Christ--"The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world"? Then this offense of yours against the Holy Spirit is put away.

"But," says another, "I am conscious of having had naturally a remarkable tenderness of spirit. From my early childhood I knew right from wrong, and when I sinned it cost me much trouble to sin. I have had to wound my conscience before I could speak an ill word, or commit an evil action." Ah, my Brethren, that is a very condemning thing, to sin against a tender conscience. It is a great benefit, and in this age a very unusual benefit, to have much sensitiveness and delicacy of moral constitution. And if you have violated it, it is certainly a great transgression. But though, "we have turned, every one to his own way, the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Let no despairing thought come upon you as though this sin were unpardonable. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." Look, now, by faith to Jesus, and you shall find that your sin is blotted out.

There may be one in this place who says, "Sir, I committed a sin under certain remarkable circumstances which I would not, could not, mention. But the remembrance of that one sin rankles in my soul at this hour. If I had not deliberately, and with malice aforethought, having not the fear of God before my eyes, chosen that sin, there might have been hope--but that sin, like a millstone, is about my neck and will sink me forever and ever." Look, Soul! Can you see Christ on the Cross? Will you now confide in Him? If so, though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be as snow.

I know not what your sin may have been, but if it were murder itself, if you would now trust the Son of God, your sin should vanish quite away from you, and you should be clean, clean every whit, before the all-seeing Eyes of Eternal Justice. O that you would believe, and this should be true to you. "No," cries another, "but mine has been a life

of peculiarly gross sin. I would not have my character unmasked before this congregation on any account." Consider then, my Friend, what it will be to have it published before a greater congregation, before the entire universe!

"Ah," you say, "I fear my condemnation is certain, for my transgressions have not been those of thought, merely, but of act. The members of my body have been the instruments of uncleanness." Listen, I pray, "All manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven unto men." There is no sin so black, save only one, but it may find forgiveness. Yes, and without exception, there is no sin that is possible to man but what it shall be forgiven to any man who comes to Christ, and with simple trust, does cast himself on Him. Your extreme evil was laid on Christ. Though you have turned unto your own way, yet this, too, was laid on Him.

Do I not hear, here and there in the congregation, hearts sighing out, "He does not strike my case yet! Mine has not been gross sin, but I have hardened my heart. I used to feel at one time I had great drawings towards the Lord Jesus, but I gave Him up. I have backslidden. I have from time to time rejected Gospel invitations, until now, at last, the Lord has sworn in His wrath that I shall not enter into His rest. My transgressions have gone over my head like overflowing waters, I sink in them as in deep mire where there is no standing."

Yes, but Soul, I must bring you back to the text. You have turned to your own way, but, if you believe, the Lord has laid on Jesus even this iniquity, also. If you will trust Him, your hardenings of heart shall now be forgiven you. You are not too late--the gate of Mercy still stands wide open. If you trust in Jesus, this iniquity shall be blotted out. "Alas," says another, "but I have been a hypocrite. I have come to the Lord's Table, and yet I have never had an interest in Christ. I

have been baptized, but yet I never had true faith."

Well, now, I will say this to end all matters--if you have perpetrated all the sins that ever were committed by men or devils. If you have defiled yourself with all the blackness that could be raked out of the lowermost kennels of Hell. If you have spoken the most damnable blasphemies and followed the most outrageous vices--yet Jesus Christ is an infinite Savior, and nothing can exceed the merit of His precious blood! "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin." Can you believe this? Can you do Christ the honor to believe this, and come and crouch at the feet that once were pierced? Ah, Man, you shall find mercy now, and you shall clap your hands and say, "He has blotted out my sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud my iniquities."

I am afraid I do not convey to you the pleasure of my own soul in turning over this thought, but it has charmed me beyond measure. Here were Lot's sins, scandalous sins. I cannot mention them--they were very different from David's sins. Black sins, scarlet sins, were those of David, but David's sins are not at all like those of Manasseh. The sins of Ma-nasseh were not the same as those of Peter--Peter sinned in quite a different track. And the woman that was a sinner, you could not liken her to Peter. And if you look to her character you could not set her side by side with Lydia. Nor if you think of Lydia, can you see her without discovering a great divergence between her and the Philippian jailer.

They are all alike. They have all gone Astray. But they are all different, they have turned, every one to his own way. But here is the blessed gathering up of them all! The Lord has made to meet on the Redeemer, as in a common focus, the iniquity of all these! And up yonder Magdalena's song joins sweetly with that of the woman who was a

sinner. And Lydia, chaste, but yet needing pardon, sings side by side with Bathsheba and Rahab--while David takes up the strain with Samson and with Gideon! And these with Abraham and with Isaac--all differently sinners--but the Atonement meeting every case.

We always think that man a quack, who advertises a medicine as healing every disease. But when you come to the great Gospel medicine--the precious blood of Jesus Christ--you have there in very deed what the old doctors used to

call a catholicon, a universal medicine. It meets every case in its distinctness It puts away sin in all its separateness of guilt as if it were made for that sin, and for that sin, alone.

III. My time has gone, and therefore I must close with this, A SPECIAL DUTY ARISING OUT OF THE SPECIAL DOCTRINE. My dear Brothers and Sisters, if in my discourse I have at all described you, or if not having described you, I have yet from that very reason indicated you as an indescribable, look to Christ and find mercy! And then ever afterwards make it a rule with your soul that as you have been a special sinner you will have special love and special gratitude, and do your Lord special service.

Oh, if it takes twenty times the Grace to save me than it does another, then I will render to my Savior twenty times the love and twenty times the service. If I am an out-of-the-way straying sheep, peculiarly and specially black, defiled and disgraced--then if He loves me I will go upon this rule--that having had much forgiven I will love much.

Brothers and Sisters, I wish you did feel, I wish I did feel, more and more the peculiarity of the weight of our personal sin, for I am sure it is the way to drive us into manliness of Christian service. If you perform homage to Christ as one of a crowd, you do but little, and that little badly. For eminent service you need to get away from the crowd

and serve the Lord personally by yourself, and as an individual. Get alone, I mean in a sense of obligation. Separate yourself, as if you were a marked man, and must serve Jesus Christ in a marked way. The separation of pride is detestable, but individuality of service is admirable. Those who stand steadily in the rank and file do well, but those who step forward to lead the forlorn hope do better.

O for more Davids to come forth and say, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" O that the Christian Church had more self-sacrificing men, like old Curtius, who, when there is a chasm to fill up, leaps into it and feels it an honor to be swallowed up for Christ's sake and the Truth's sake. O for many a Christian who, like the Roman hero, will hold his hand in the fire if need be, and flinch not, feeling that all suffering were little to bear for one who bled for us. We want more consecrated men. May God raise them up. And He will if you who feel your special sinnership find special mercy--and then render to God special returns.

It has struck me that we need more and more in the pulpit, and in the pew, individuality in our Christian experience and service. You see, we are all individuals in sinning, we have turned, every one to his own way, and yet many Christian people want to have their experience modeled after the example of someone else. They do not like to grow like God's trees in the forest, with their gnarled roots and twisted boughs. They want to be clipped like Dutch trees into one uniform stiffness. Why, you lose the beauty of Christianity when you lose the individuality of Christians!

In preaching and Sunday school teaching, and everything else, the tendency is to go too much to ill ruts and grooves. One might fancy that men and women were made by machinery, like pens at Birmingham, all of a sort. We would have every man in Grace as individual as he was in

sin. We need the originality of saintly life as well as of sinnership.

It were well if a Christian man would step out of the beaten track and carry out his individuality and be what God especially meant him to be. Brethren, there is a part of this world which can never get a blessing except through you. Christ has power over all flesh, and He has given His servants power over their little portions of that great mass.

All the ministers that ever lived cannot bring to Christ those souls whom God has ordained that I shall be the means of turning to Christ. And neither I, nor my Brethren, preach as we may, can bring to Christ the man whom God has ordained to save through yonder obscure village preacher who is now standing on a log on the village green, or holding forth in a wooden shed in the backwoods of America. There is a place for every man--and the way for every man to find that out is to be himself and nobody else. As he used to be himself when he was a sinner, so let him be himself now he has become a saint, and follow out, under God's guidance, the movements of his own individualities, the singularities of his own nature.

Do not think about planing off your edges and getting rid of the points God has made in you distinct from other men. It will never do. You lose of Christianity the very beauty and excellence if you do this. Your fine critics would have Rowland Hill preach like Thomas Chalmers--Rowland Hill must never utter a witticism in the pulpit, yet he could not be Rowland Hill if he did not. He must, therefore, be transformed into someone else, for these superfine gentlemen will not allow that Rowland Hill as Rowland Hill can honor God. Wisdom will be of all her children. Whether you speak with the learning of Apollos, or with the eloquence of a Paul, or with the blunt homeliness of a Cephas, the Lord will get to Himself honor, if you speak sincerely.

And it is not for Paul to mimic Cephas, nor for Cephas to copy Apollos.

As we have turned, every one to his own way, and our peculiar sin has been laid on Christ, so let each Believer now, in his own way, under the direction of Christ, seek to serve his Lord and Master. My great practical lesson from it is this--you are always seeing new inventions in the world, men are evermore bringing out some new system or scheme. We tunnel the earth, we split the clouds, we speak by lightning, we ride on the wings of the wind. But in the Christian Church how few inventors we have!

Robert Raikes invented the Sunday school. John Pounds invented Ragged schools--have we come to the end of gracious ingenuity? Oh, if we loved Christ better, every man would invent something--he would have a mode of action growing out of his own peculiar capacities. He would feel that God meant to meet a case by him that would never be met by anybody else. Men are all alive about this world, and all asleep about the world to come. I would urge you each to have a mission, to espouse a work, to obtain a calling. Ask God not to put you into the Sunday school as a matter of mere Providence, but as a matter of special ordination.

And if you are ordained to be a Sunday school teacher, ask Him to put you into some particular class, not as by an accident, but as a special sphere for your special character and taste, and mode of thought, and manner of action. Follow, as God the Holy Spirit shall help you, the promptings of the Divine life that God has put within you. And as you served Satan with all your individuality, even so serve Him upon whom the Lord of old did lay your iniquity. The Lord bless you for Christ's sake.

Chapter 18

The Sine Qua Non

(No. 926)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 17, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

John 13:8.

IN matchless condescension our Lord had girt Himself as a servant, and was washing the feet of the disciples. Peter, struck with such a spectacle, would not allow his Lord to act as a menial, and flatly refused to have his feet washed by his Master. But he changed his mind at once when he was told that a refusal to receive this act of kindness from his Lord would be a virtual rejection of all part in Him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." I do not think our Lord here was thinking so much of the literal washing, as of that which the outward ablution was meant to represent. This is clear when we remember that our Lord replied to Peter concerning this washing, "What I do you know not now. But you shall know hereafter."

Now as to the literal washing, Peter knew all about it, and there was nothing to be explained except its inner meaning, and spiritual teaching. This it was that Peter did not then know, and was afterwards to learn. Our Lord, therefore, evidently referred not so much to the actual foot-washing, as to the spiritual washing, which is absolutely essential to all His people. Remember, too, that the mere cleansing of the feet did not involve union to Christ, for the feet of Judas were washed, and our Lord did not at all mean that Judas should imagine that he had any part with the Lord whom he was resolved to betray.

The traitor was numbered among the disciples, and therefore he partook of the outward ordinance, but it did not convey to him any spiritual interest in Christ Jesus. Therefore we conclude that the foot-washing was only secondarily important. Yet we deny not that our Lord did mean so much about this mere outward washing, that had Peter obstinately refused to yield to it, he would have proved himself to have had no true loyalty of heart, and consequently no part in Christ.

Any act of direct and intentional rebellion against Christ's authority, obstinately and knowingly continued in, would be a sure token that the person guilty of it was no true partaker with Christ. How shall I be His servant if I willfully reject any one of His commands? How can I consider myself to be truly a Christian while my will is rebellious, and refuses to submit to the express orders of my Lord? Let us consider this as professors, and practice instant obedience. Never let us obstinately refuse obedience to a command because it seems to us to be nonessential or trivial. We are not to be judges but servants. No motive can excuse disobedience.

Let us ask for Divine Grace that as soon as ever we see a sin to be sin we may shun it, and as soon as we perceive a duty to be a duty we may at once practice it, and never be guilty of any willful rebellion, since that might prove us to be without Christ. However, I still believe that Christ's main teaching in my text referred not to the washing with water, but to the cleansing of our spiritual nature by His precious blood and by His Eternal Spirit. In this sense read again the words, "If I do not wash you, you have no, part with Me."

I. First suffer me to occupy your thoughts a few minutes with THE GREAT OBJECT OF OUR DESIRE. Our great object is to have a part in Jesus Christ. I am addressing myself, for the most part, to those who regularly hear the Word, and who have a respect for the name of Jesus,

and a longing to be saved with His salvation. I hope there is not one among us who would consider it a barren honor to have a part with Christ, nor one who would think it to be a small calamity to be deprived of his part with Jesus the Son of God.

Brethren, you and I desire to have part in the merit of His righteousness. We have no righteousness of our own, but we desire that He should be the Lord our Righteousness, that in His righteousness arrayed we should not be found naked in the day of the great wedding feast, but with the wedding garment on may sit down to the marriage supper. We desire to have a part in His death. Jesus died that He might make atonement for guilt, and we desire a part in His atoning sacrifice. We are guilty. Our heart yearns to be washed in the blood, to be cleansed by that expiation, and to stand before the Lord accepted in the Beloved.

We hope that the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world will give us a part in His sin-removing power. We believe in His Resurrection, and our prayer is that we may have part in it--because He rose we also may rise, and may forever, both in body and in soul, enjoy eternal blessedness. Our faith has seen the Crucified One ascending to the skies, and we desire a part in His ascension, to share in the blessings which He received for rebellions men when He led captivity captive. Yes, and before long to tread that same starry way, and enter into the rest where He is, and behold the Glory which God has given to Him.

We aspire to share in His intercession. Before the Father's Throne He presents His ever-accepted supplication, and we trust that He pleads for us that blessings numberless may descend upon us unworthy ones. We were wretched, indeed, if we had not a persuasion that we share a part in the pleadings of our great High Priest. We trust our name is

engraved on one of the precious stones of His breastplate, and is so borne before God. Moreover, we know that Christ sits at the right hand of God as King, all things being delivered into His hands, and we desire to have a part with Him in His kingdom, to be partakers of the peace which His scepter brings--yes, and to be ourselves made kings to reign with Him.

Moreover, we expect His second advent. In the same manner as He went up to Heaven, in that same manner will He descend, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God, in His own proper Person actually and really, not in myth and phantom, but in very deed. As He is gone from us, so shall He come again, and then will He take to Himself all power, and reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. We hope to participate in the glory of His appearing and kingdom.

Whatever the Millennium may be, whatever the splendor of the latter day, our aspiration is that we may have a part with Christ in all these things. We would not shun His Cross, for we desire His crown. We would not desert Him in His humiliation, for we hope to attend Him in His triumph. We would cheerfully go forth without the camp and bear the reproach for His sake, for we hope to stand among the camp of the faithful ones when the crowns of immortality shall be distributed. Our soul's deepest desire is that we may have a part with Christ.

My dear Brethren, I hope most of us here present know what it is to have a part in Christ, for we were elect in Him from before the foundation of the world. We have been make partakers of His Spirit, and have been brought into union with Him. We have submitted ourselves to His government. We are looking to Him for our salvation. We have a part with Him as members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones--a part with Him as branches in the vine, as stones in the temple. We are serving under His banner in the same holy war, and laborers in the same

sacred service. We have a part with Him as His friends and as His chosen whom He has admitted into the most familiar communion with Himself.

We are much deceived if this is not the case. But if it, indeed, is so, we feel that the blessed fact is altogether due to Divine Grace, and it could never have been so if we had not first been washed. If we have not as yet participated in the blessings which come to us through Christ, we know, this morning, for the text tells us, that we must be washed before we can have a part with Him. Brethren, we desire to be sons as He is a Son. We wish to be heirs as He is an Heir. We pant to be accepted as He is accepted. We aspire to be, before long, glorified as He is glorified. This is a blessing worthy of the utmost intensity of desire, and it is a blessing which we must obtain or we shall sink miserably down to everlasting de-struction--since to be without Christ is to be without hope.

II. After these few words upon what it is to have a part with Jesus, I come to notice, in the second place, THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATION FOR OBTAINING AND ENJOYING A PART WITH CHRIST. It is essential that He should wash us. Observe then, that the qualification is not one of merit on our part, it is one of mercy on His part. If He had said, "Except you obtain a superior degree of holiness, you have no part in Me," we might have become dispirited, desponding, and even despairing. But the very chief of sinners may find comfort in such a word as this. Here is nothing of merit but all of mercy. Whatever is your sin, O Sinner, Christ can wash you! The only qualification for having a part in all Covenant blessings is that you as a sinner are washed by Jesus. There is no specification of something to be given on our part. It is something to be received. It is not demanded that we act as servants to Christ and wash His feet, but that He in tender condescension should be

servant to us and wash our feet. If there were a matter of giving mentioned, O you poor and needy, you who are spiritually bankrupt, there might be reason for you to mourn! But since the essential, the great sine qua non is one of

mercy alone, you may be comforted. You have but to come in all your filth and all your unworthiness and be washed, and this one thing shall give you part and lot in Christ.

But what is meant by this washing, which is the essential qualification for a man to have part with Christ? I understand it to mean one thing, namely, purification through the Lord Jesus--which one thing, however, will be best understood if we describe it as four things.

First, no man has any part in Christ who does not receive the first all-essential washing in the precious blood, by which all sin is once and forever put away. The moment a sinner believes in Jesus Christ, his iniquities are seen as laid on Christ the Substitute, and the Believer himself is free from sin. Though he may have been up to now black as an Ethiopian, yet is he washed in the fountain filled from the Redeemer's veins, and he stands before God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. There is such a blessed fact as the instantaneous reception of a perfect pardon through faith in Jesus Christ, and this happens the moment a sinner truly looks to the great atoning Sacrifice.

If you rely on the Substitute, and the matchless expiation which He made for human guilt, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you. If He does not wash you, you have no part in Him--but if His blood atones for you, He is yours. If you do not receive His perfect, unrivalled, Godlike blood-washing, you are no Christian. Whatever is your profession, whatever your supposed experience, whatever your reformation, whatever you may have attempted or accom-plished--if you have never come as a guilty one, and seen your sin laid upon the

bleeding Son of God, you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity--you have neither part nor lot in this matter. Without faith in the Atonement you can have no part in Christ.

There follows a second cleansing, which is, in some respects, but a branch of the first, namely, daily pardon for sin through faith in Jesus. As day by day we fall into sin, we are taught to pray each day, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." And there is provision made in Christ Jesus for this daily pardon, since besides being the Paschal Lamb, our Lord is the morning and evening Lamb for daily guilt. This is what Christ meant, especially when He washed the disciples' feet, for He told them that He did not wash their head and their hands, because they had been washed. And, therefore, as being clean, they needed not to wash anything but their feet.

We who have once been pardoned have no need to be pardoned again in the sense in which we were at first. But we do have need in another sense, and in another respect, to seek a daily forgiveness of recurring sin.

To use a simile which may, perhaps, explain what I mean--the priest of God, when first consecrated, was washed from head to foot, and so baptized into the service of the sanctuary. But later, each time he went to offer sacrifice, he washed his feet and his hands in the brazen laver. No need to give the complete immersion on each occasion--that had been given at first--and he was ceremonially purged from pollution, and made a priest unto God.

But accidental defilement, incidental to everyday life, had to be cleansed away, not to make the man a priest, but to keep him in proper condition for the right discharge of his priestly office. Even so, every Believer is made a priest unto God, and does not need to be made a priest again, but to be daily cleansed from everything that might

prevent him from the best discharge of his sacred duties. Permit me the use of another simile--here is a blackamoor, black from head to foot. But he is washed in a miraculous bath, and so made white, white as snow. The man will never want another washing to remove his natural blackness, that is gone forever.

But, my Brethren, he may still need frequent washings, for as a white man he will constantly need the removal of stains incident to his being in this world. A sinner does not need, again, the first washing to be repeated, for that has put him into a new position towards God--but he needs a washing as a justified man to maintain his conscience in peace, and his heart pure for service. The leper, once purged under the Law, was clean and might go into the congregation of the Lord's House. Yet as a clean man and as admitted into the congregation, he had the ordinary need to wash which was incidental to every Israelite.

Or to put it yet in another form--I, a criminal, am forgiven. All my crimes against the great Judge of all the earth are blotted out. I need no second acquittal. The acquittal which was given me when I first believed in Christ included all my sins, past, present, and to come. As before the bar of God I am clean, and need no further washing--but now being made a child, I stand not at His bar, but at His table, and alas--I commit sins as a child! Sins which will not condemn me, for I am not under the Law but under Grace, but sins which require me as a child to go to my Father, and say to Him

each day, "My Father in Heaven, forgive me my daily trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me." This it is which you must receive every day, and if you do not receive it, you have no part in Christ.

If you think you do not sin at all, and have not, therefore, any need of washing, you have no part in Christ. If you fancy that you do not

require this daily washing of the feet, take it for granted that you are too proud to understand yourself and that you have not been humbled as you ought to be. All those who are in Christ feel that they need each day that He should come and wash their feet. Though they are clean every whit, yet still they need their feet to be washed by Him.

A third thing included in this feet-washing, I believe, is the continual sanctification which faith in Jesus Christ carries on within us by the power of the Holy Spirit. If a man professes to be a Christian and is not in his walk and conversation holier than other men, that man's profession is vain. There are some who seem to think that we are to come to Christ as sinners, and then after having believed in Him are to live as we did before.

My Brethren, it is not so. Christ saves His people from their sins. When you hear the complaints of God's servants concerning their temptations and their indwelling sins, you are not to conclude that sin has dominion over them, or that they have not overcome sin, or that they are not the men they once were. No, my Brethren, I believe the holier a man becomes, the more he mourns over the unholiness which remains in him. But he is in very truth a far better man--he is a spiritual and holy man. If Jesus washes you not, so that you become godly and upright, you may depend upon it, you have no part in Him. If He does not wash that tongue, and cleanse away those angry, or idle, or filthy words. If He does not wash those hands, and render them impossible to perform a dishonest or unchaste act. If He does not wash your feet and render it impossible they should be able to carry you to the haunts of vice and criminal amusement--you have no part in Him. It is all worthless for unconverted persons to be baptized and come to His Table, for if He has not sanctified you in some measure He has not

justified you.

If you are not a changed man, neither are you a saved man. And if you do not aspire after holiness, neither need you hope that you shall have a part in the Heaven of the blessed. "If I wash you not, you have no part with Me." It includes then, you see, the first pardon, the successive pardons of each day, and the sanctifying work by which He cleanses us with the washing of water by the Word.

Once more, I think, in this foot-washing, our Savior meant to get forth the daily communion which the true Christian has with Christ. It was a very singular thing for a disciple to be sitting there and for the Master to be washing his feet. It was an astounding fact, a wonder, a miracle, a Divine Grace which Peter could hardly think possible. But every Christian's life must be a series of similar wonders. Each day he will have to obtain from his Lord some things for which it really seems as if he ought not to have dared to ask. They appear too good and too great for him to receive.

I know, and you know what it is to go to the Lord Jesus Christ about little things, about household cares, about daily trials, about the troubles of our spirit, the distractions of our mind. It is a mark of a child to be able to do so. It is, in fact, a continuance of the foot-washing which our Lord gave to Peter. Washing feet is not a great or essential act. A man may live, though his feet after a journey may not be cooled by the refreshing stream from the pitcher. It is a small act, a grateful and refreshing act, and just such things Jesus Christ must continue to do for you and for me, if we are His people. We shall, in times of need, find Jesus in our chamber still clothed with the towel and bearing the basin--ready still to wait on us and administer loving refreshments.

And we shall often wonder, "What? Did He really help me in such a thing

as that, and did I dare to take such a case as that to Him?" Unbelief will say, "I dare not do that again. Lord, You shall never wash my feet. I cannot, I dare not make a servant of You for such common things as these. I will leave the great matters of salvation with You, but I will not come to You each day for ordinary things." But, Beloved, unless we do so--unless we live this life of reception of great Grace for little occasions. Unless we live receiving wonders of loving kindness which we feel we have no right to receive--marvels of mercy surpassing all expectation. Unless, I say, our life is made up of tender mercies of which we are utterly unworthy--Jesus is not washing our feet--and we have no part with Him.

Put these four things together, and I think you have caught the thought of our Master. It is very blessed to think that the very first portion of the least Believer is to be washed, and this is the most essential thing of all. Though we may not as yet wear those brighter Graces which are the ornaments of the Christian life, and cannot as yet rejoice that we are

full-grown men in Christ--yet if we are only little babes whose chief portion is to be washed, we have sure evidence of a part with Jesus. We may be too little to do much service. We may be too weak to achieve great victories. But if our Lord has but taken us to Himself, and washed us, we have a part with Him. The most essential thing, you see, is that which the feeblest and the newest born of all the heavenly family possesses. Washing is for every trembling sinner who trusts in Christ--and it is as good proof of a part in Christ as the highest degree of Grace.

III. But I must pass on now to notice, in the third place, WHY THIS WASHING IS SO ESSENTIAL. And I answer,

first, unless Christ washes us we have no part in Him because the

claims of our Lord require it. Suppose a man shall say, "I have no need of washing." Brethren, it is clear that he has no part in Christ, because Christ came on purpose to cleanse His people from their sins. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The whole have no need of a physician--only they that are sick.

If a man does not take Jesus to be his Savior, he may say what he likes about Him, but he does not even know the meaning of His name. May not a very sincere person admire Christ's Character, and talk well of Him? Yes, and we shall be glad that he is able to go so far in the right way. But let not such a man deceive himself with the hope that he will be a partaker of any of the blessings which Christ brings unless he acknowledges that for which Christ is the Christ or the anointed One--namely, to bring the Gospel of salvation to the unworthy.

One of old said, "Aut Caesar aut nullus"--he would be either Caesar or nobody. And so Jesus Christ will be either acknowledged the anointed Savior, or He will be nothing to you. If you will not take Him to be an Expiation for your sins, and the true Refiner of your life, you refuse Him altogether. Mere admiration of the physician gives no part in his healing power. The loudest praises of light give not vision to blind men. Jesus is either the Savior or nothing. For this He lived. For this He died. Alas, for those who will not receive Him in this Character! In the long run you shall always find that, despite their soft speeches, they have not received the true Christ of God.

He who rejects Jesus as an atoning Sacrifice is sure to doubt His Godhead, and so to reject His grander nature. The deniers of the Atonement, who are supposed to be admirers of the example of Christ, generally turn out to be the greatest enemies to vital Christianity. There are no more real enemies of Christ than those who deny the doctrine of the Cross. If they do not accept Christ to wash them, they

soon prove that they have no part in Him. Unless men need cleansing from sin, and unless His blood, alone, can cleanse them, Our Lord came on a frivolous errand--He descended to this world to perform an unnecessary work--and He was foolish enough to shed His blood with the most absurd of motives.

If men need to be washed, then He came in Divine wisdom and philanthropy, and He lived and He died with an object worthy of His Divine mind--and His life was no mistake. But if men do not need cleansing, Christ's death was a mistake, and His whole life, I dare to say it, was a piece of base imposture--for He was evermore professing Himself to be the Savior of sinners, and the Pardoner of sin. He spoke of giving rest to the weary, and of saving the lost--if He could not save, or if men did not require saving--the life of Christ was a mistake, and His mission an imposition. Jesus Christ is nothing, His very name is ridiculous--if there are none to save, and if He is not a Savior anointed.

You have no part in Christ, then, however much you applaud Him, unless you are washed by Him. You have rejected that for which He lived, and for which He died--you have despised that which He considers to be His noble lifework, and for the joy of which He gave Himself up to death, if you refuse to be washed by Him. Someone, perhaps, may say, "I believe I need washing, but I am confident I can purify myself. I have bad habits, and undesirable infirmities, but I can master the habits and can conquer the infirmity. I believe a man ought to be holy and become like God, and by diligent perseverance I conceive that I can do it."

Do it, then, Sir. I challenge you to do it, but you certainly have no part in Christ. Whatever you may think of Christ, you can have no part in Him, for He comes on purpose to save His people from their sins. His

very name is Jesus the Savior--for that same reason was He born--and if you can do it yourself, you are a rival to Him--you are an Antichrist. You will owe Him nothing, and you shall have no part in Him. Ah, see then, and mark it well--unless we are washed, we ignore the claims of Christ--we cast a slur upon the great labor of His life, and we rob Him of His main Glory.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is Himself so infinitely pure, so altogether holy, both as God and Man, that when we come to Him we must first be cleansed by Him before He can enter into fellowship with us. There is a fellowship with us as sinners which He graciously adopts, for He receives sinners and eats with them. But into fellowship with His

deep thoughts, His blessed purposes, and His Divine Nature, He brings no man till first He has washed Him in His blood. If you refuse Him, then, as the Refiner who shall purify the sons of Levi, and take away their dross and sin, and then present them to Himself as much fine gold, you have refused all part in Christ.

Again, the blessings which are in Christ are so spiritual that till we are cleansed we cannot enjoy them. Who can see God but those who are first made pure in heart? Who can have peace with God but those who are justified by faith? The blessings of the Covenant are not like oil and wine, which the ungodly man can rejoice in--neither are they like silver and gold, which the carnal heart can laugh over. But they are blessings, pure and refined, which the natural man knows not--which only the man renewed by the Spirit of God can ever prize--for to others they are far above and out of sight. You must be born again. You must be washed. You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds or else Heaven, itself, would not be a Heaven to you--and the things of the kingdom of God you could not know--its joys you could not enter into.

Your lack of washing disqualifies you.

Moreover, man's nature is such that if he did but know it, it is impossible for him to have part with Christ without washing. Peter did not see on his feet what Christ could see there. I mean not on the flesh of his feet, but on what they represent, namely, his daily life. Christ could see in Peter blots and blurs, and spots and defilement which made Him indeed say, "Alas, My poor Follower, you can have no part with Me unless I wash you. Poor Peter, if you did know yourself, you would see how impossible it is for Me to give you a portion with Me till first I have cleansed you." So, Brethren, if we had a sight of ourselves, a true sight in God's own light--instead of starting back from Christ the Purifier, we would cry to Him incessantly, "Wash me, O Lord, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean--wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

For all these reasons, then, the washing by our Master becomes a necessity. You cannot have a part in Christ unless you are washed by Him.

IV. Just for a moment or two I shall ask you to think of some THINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD AS SUBSTITUTES for being washed by Jesus Christ.

Peter had such a love for his Master, and such an admiration for Him that he very humbly said, "Do You wash my feet?" Now would not Peter's humble reverential estimation of Christ stand him in good place? Might he not be accepted even though his feet were not washed? Ah, no! "If I wash you not, you have no part in Me." If any of you feel your un-worthiness, and mourn it, and are kept back from Christ by the thought that you are not fit to be saved--will this humility, this supposed humility--save you? My Hearer, the answer is NO. Unless you have faith in Christ, and He washes you, you have no part in Him.

No repentance, no remorse, no chastenings of your spirit, no humblings of your soul--if they exist apart from a living faith in Him--can give you any part in Him. O that you would give up this ruinous humility and trust in Jesus to cleanse you! For unless you do, though you humble yourself from morning to morning, and water the earth with your tears, and make your bed to swim with them--yet shall you have no part in Christ. Peter had performed distinguished service for his Master. He had gone with the other Apostles and preached the Gospel, and cast out devils. And he was one of those who returned and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us"--would not this do? Would not these achievements prove that Peter had part in Christ?

He preached so boldly, he faced the crowd so nobly--would not that suffice? No, my dear Hearers. Though any of us should possess tongues of men and of angels, and give our bodies to be burned--yet if Christ washes us not, we have no part in Him. We must not hope that the noble service can stand in the place of the washing by the expiatory Atonement of Christ.

But Peter had enjoyed very remarkable views of Christ's Glory. He was one of the three who went up the Mount of Transfiguration, and there saw the Lord in splendor. And at other times with the other two favorites of the Master, he had been admitted to sights denied to common eyes--would not all this prove his part in Jesus? I sometimes hear men and women boasting out of measure of the "coming Glory." And I know they give their chief attention to the prophecies of that Glory. I would not deny them all that they are likely to get from such studies. But I would remind them that it is not as glorified as the fact that Jesus puts away sin. He atoned for it as Christ Crucified, and as such He is our hope. Though a man bathe day after day in the very light of the Millennium, and though he understand all mysteries--yet if Jesus

washes him not, if he has not justification through the blood, and holiness through the work of the Spirit--it profits him nothing. Visions of Glory, however transporting they may be, give you no part in Him.

But Peter had walked on water once when his Master bade him come to Him! Though he did, at last, begin to sink, yet for awhile he trod the waves, and found the water marble beneath his feet. Did not that prove him to possess a part in Christ? No, my Brethren, not if Christ washed him not. If you had faith to remove mountains, yet if you had not this blood-washing, this daily washing, you would have no part in Christ.

But this man Peter had received deep instruction! Did not his Master say, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you"? Yes, but I add that though you possessed all knowledge, and could interpret all mysteries, yet if Jesus washes you not, you have no part in Him.

It is not the power to occupy the pulpit. It is not the power to cast out a devil. It is not the power to work a miracle. It is not the power, even, to shake Heaven or earth that can prove you to have a part in Christ--it is the simply going down humbly to the fountain filled with blood and being washed there, which is the indispensable qualification--and nothing else can stand in the place of this. Peter, no doubt, was full of zealous enthusiasm. He could say, "Though all should deny You, yet will not I. I will go with You to prison and to death." But the greatest imaginable zeal does not prove a man to have a part in Christ if he is not truly washed.

I do implore you, my dear Hearers, to do what I anxiously wish to do myself, namely, to make sure that you have been cleansed in the blood of Jesus. It is one thing to know about that blood. It is another thing

to have it applied to the conscience. It is one thing to know you ought daily to be washed. It is quite another thing to get that daily washing. It is one thing to believe, "I ought to be holy." It is another thing to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in me to make me holy. It is one thing to see the faults of others--but quite another thing to confess my own and to be cleansed from them by the Savior.

Search yourselves, I pray you. You may have but little time to do it in--therefore be on the alert, and examine yourself! For don't you hear the sentence, full of love and full of pity, and yet as stern as the thunderclaps which pealed from Sinai's Smoking summit--"If I wash you not, you have no part in Me"? If He does not justify you. If He does not daily forgive you. If He does not daily sanctify you. If He does not daily perform condescending deeds of tenderness and kindness towards you, you have no part in Him.

V. So let us close with LESSONS OF WISDOM upon which I linger but a minute or two. The lesson of wisdom which comes first is this--let no supposed humility keep any of you from believing in Jesus Christ. The way of Grace is miracle from beginning to end. Stagger not, therefore, to begin with accepting a miracle of Grace. You say, "I cannot believe that Christ could forgive such a Hell-deserving sinner as I am. I have not any claims on Him. I have been such a wretch. I cannot think that simply on my trusting Him, He, out of His abundant mercy, will forgive my sins."

My dear Friend, if you cannot believe that to begin with--it is but the commencement miracle--there are still greater things than these! "But I am so unworthy!" I know you are, it is all true--you are much more unworthy than you have any idea of. You do not deserve to live. You do not deserve to be out of Hell. But since God is gracious, and He bids you trust Christ and you shall live, do not be damned because you are

too proudly humble to be saved! You tell me I speak sarcastically. I tell you, rather, I speak the Truth of God. It is Satan who deceives you by making you believe that there is any humility in doubting the mercy of God in Christ Jesus!

What if you are the worst sinner out of damnation? If God tells you He will save you upon your believing and being baptized, why, Man, believe and be baptized and be saved! And may God the Holy Spirit lead you to do that now. What have you to do with saying it is too good a thing? If God chooses to give it, who are you to say it is too good? You must be washed by Christ or else perish! O do not stand back because it seems too good for you to receive! You must be washed, I say, or perish! Take the good that God provides you and be grateful for it.

What if God Himself came down from Heaven and put on human flesh and suffered and died that you might not suffer and die? I grant you it is a miracle that makes the very seraphim astonished and causes the whole universe to tremble with amazement. But why do you draw back from it and say, "Because it is so great I will not receive it"? Do you refuse the air because a bounteous God has made it so abundant? Do you refuse to drink of the river because it is so deep and broad? Will you refuse God's mercy because that mercy is so illimitable, so vast, so Divine? O do not! I say again, damn not yourself under pretense of humility--but come as you are, and accept the mercy which is freely presented to you in

Christ Jesus, in the Gospel which He has bid us preach. Remember, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not, shall be damned."

A further lesson of wisdom is this--as you must not let a supposed humility keep you back, so let no other kind of feeling keep you from Christ. The feeling may seem to be very right and very proper, but if

it prevents your being saved, it is a bad feeling. I know your human nature may excuse it and say, "Why, this is commendable for a man to feel his sin so great! Is it not even praiseworthy?" I answer, nothing is commendable which makes a man think that God cannot forgive him. Feel your sin to be as great as you will, but do not, therefore, slander God as though He were unwilling to forgive you.

Your feeling may look pretty in the darkness of your ignorance, but in the brightness of the eternal light, any feeling that keeps you away from the Cross and away from your Father God is a damnable feeling, and therefore away with it! Believe at once! I charge you to believe in the name of Jesus of Nazareth! I, His servant charge you in His name--believe Him! As He spoke to the winds and they were hushed, and to the waves and they were stilled, so in His name I speak to you all! I say trust Him and you shall find peace for your spirit and joy for your soul, both now and forever.

The last word shall be this--remember, my dear Friends, what you are if you remain unwashed. And remember what you will be if you are washed. If you remain unwashed you have no part in Him. The past unforgiven, the present unchanged, the future unsanctified. There remains for you, when the dread summons comes that shall separate your soul from your body, nothing that can comfort, nothing that can afford a ray of hope. Convicted before the bar of God of ten thousand offenses against His righteous Law, convicted of mad, insane rebellion against God in having refused the Gospel of His dear Son, you must be driven from His Presence. And I warn you that within the cover of His Book there is not so much as a single jot or tittle that breathes anything like consolation to a spirit that has once been condemned of God after death.

Men have tried to contort this Bible and make it say something that

might encourage a soul to reject Christ. But there is here nothing but a fearful looking for ofjudgment and of fiery indignation which shall devour the unbeliever. It is now or never with you! I beseech you--look to Jesus Christ and live! To be washed! How simple! Nothing is asked of you but to take what Christ has made ready for you. To be washed! How necessary! To be washed now! How easy! O cast not away the promise of God through unbelief, but accept the washing, lest you cast yourself into eternal condemnation!

If you believe in Jesus now, you shall be cleansed, your life shall become new. The preaching of morality helps but little. Men have been preached at with morality till they have become drunkards and swearers. Vice laughs at the preaching of morality. But the preaching of Christ Crucified and the Gospel of Substitution is efficacious--as many here are testifying by their renewed lives and changed behavior.

Trust Christ, then, and as your present life will be changed, your future life will be unboundedly blessed. When your turn shall come to depart out of the world unto the Father, you shall be with Jesus where He is--and you shall behold His Glory. Oh, then, be washed and have part in all the splendor that is to be revealed! Be washed now, and His shall be the glory. Amen.

Chapter 19

Martha And Mary

(No. 927)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that He entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus 'feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was cumbered aboutmuch serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has leftme to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, 'Martha, Martha, you are careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:38-42.

IT is not an easy thing to maintain the balance of our spiritual life. No man can be spiritually healthy who does not meditate and commune. No man, on the other hand, is as he should be unless he is active and diligent in holy service. David sweetly sang, "He makes me to lie down in green pastures." There was the contemplative. "He leads me beside the still waters." There was the active and progressive. The difficulty is to maintain the two--and to keep each in its relative proportion to the other. We must not be so active as to neglect communion, nor so contemplative as to become unpractical.

In the chapter from which our text is taken we have several lessons on this subject. The seventy disciples returned from their preaching tour flushed with the joy of success. And our Savior, to refine that joy and prevent its degenerating into pride, bids them rather rejoice that

their names were written in Heaven. He conducted their contemplations to the glorious doctrine of election, that grateful thoughts might sober them after successful work. He bids them consider themselves as debtors to Divine Grace, which reveals unto babes the mysteries of God--for He would not allow their new position as workers to make them forget that they were the chosen of God--and therefore debtors.

Our wise Master next returns to the subject of service, and instructs them by the memorable parable of the good Samaritan and the wounded man. And then as if they might vainly imagine philanthropy, as it is the service of Christ, to be the only service of Christ, and to be the only thing worth living for, He brings in the two sisters of Bethany.

The Holy Spirit meant thereby to teach us that while we ought to abound in service, and to do good abundantly to our fellow men, yet we must not fail in worship, in spiritual reverence, in meek discipleship, and quiet contemplation. While we are practical, like the seventy--practical like the Samaritan--practical like Martha, we are, also, like the Savior, to rejoice in spirit, and say, "Father, I thank You," and we are also like Mary, to sit down in quietude and nourish our souls with Divine Truth.

This short narrative, I suppose, might be paraphrased something after this fashion. Martha and Mary were two most excellent sisters, both converted, both lovers of Jesus, both loved by Jesus, for we are expressly told that He loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus. They were both women of a choice spirit--our savior's selection of their house as a frequent resort proved that they were an unusually gracious family. They are persons representative of different forms of excellence, and I think it altogether wrong to treat Martha as some have done, as if she had no love for good things, and was nothing better than a mere worldling. It was not so.

Martha was a most estimable and earnest woman, a true Believer, and an ardent follower of Jesus whose joy it was to entertain Jesus at the house of which she was the mistress. When our Lord made His appearance on this occasion at Bethany, the first thought of Martha was, "Here is our most noble guest, we must prepare for Him a sumptuous entertainment." Perhaps she marked our Savior's weariness, or saw some traces of that exhaustion which made Him look so much older than He was. And she, therefore, set to work with the utmost diligence to prepare a feast for Him.

She was careful about many things, and as she went on with her preparations, fresh matters occurred to ruffle her mind, and she became worried. And, being somewhat vexed that her sister took matters so coolly, she begged the Master

to upbraid her. Now Mary had looked upon the occasion from another point of view. As soon as she saw Jesus come into the house she thought, "What a privilege have I now to listen eagerly to such a Teacher, and to treasure up His precious words! He is the Son of God, I will worship, I will adore, and every word He utters shall be stored in my memory."

She forgot the needs both of the Master and His followers, for her faith saw the inner Glory which dwelt within Him. She was so overpowered with reverence, and so wrapt in devout wonder, that she became oblivious of all outward things. She had no faults to find with Martha for being so busy. She did not even think of Martha--she was altogether taken up with her Lord and with those gracious words which He was speaking. She had no will, either, to censure or to praise or to think even of herself. Everything was gone from her but her Lord and the word which He was uttering.

See, then, that Martha was serving Christ, but so was Mary. Martha

meant to honor Christ, so did Mary. They both agreed in their design, but they differed in their way of carrying it out. And while Martha's service is not censured (only her being cumbered comes under the censure), yet Mary is expressly commended, as having chosen the good part. And therefore we do Martha no injustice if we show wherein she came short, and wherein Mary exceeded.

Our first observation will be this--the Martha spirit is very prevalent in the Church of God just now. In the second place, the Martha spirit very much injures true service. In the third place, the Mary spirit is the source of the noble form of consecration.

I. THE MARTHA SPIRIT IS VERY PREVALENT IN THE CHURCH at this period--prevalent in some quarters to a mischievous degree--and among us all to a perilous extent. What do we intend by saying that the Martha spirit is prevalent just now? We mean, first, that there is a considerable tendency among Christian people, in serving Christ, to aim at making a fair show in the flesh. Martha wanted to give our Lord right worthy entertainment which should be a credit to her house and to her family--and herein she is commendable far above those careless ones who think anything good enough for Christ.

So also, among professing Christians, there is at this present time a desire to give to the cause of Christ buildings notable for their architecture and beauty. We must have no more barns. Our meeting houses must exhibit our improving taste. If possible, our chapels must be correctly Gothic or sternly classical in all their details, both without and within. As to the service, we must cultivate the musical and the tasteful. We are exhorted not to be barely decent, but to aim at the sublime and beautiful. Our public worship, it is thought, should be impressive if not imposing. Care should be taken that the music should be chaste, the singing conformed to the best rules of the arts,

and the preaching eloquent and attractive.

So everything in connection with Christian labor should be made to appear generous and noble. By all means the subscription lists must be kept current. Each denomination must excel the other in the amount of its annual funds-- surely everything done for Christ ought to be done in the best possible style. Now in all this there is much that is good, much that is really intended to honor the Lord, so we see no room to censure--but yet we will show you a more excellent way. These things you may do, but there are higher things which you must do, or suffer loss.

Brethren, there is something better to be studied than the outward, for though this may be aimed at with a single eye to God's Glory--and we judge no man--yet we fear the tendency is to imagine that mere externals are precious in the Master's sight. I know He counts it a very small matter whether your House of Prayer is a cathedral or a barn. To the Savior it is small concern whether you have organs or whether you have none--whether you sing after the choicest rules of psalmody or not. He looks at your hearts, and if these ascend to Him. He accepts the praise. As for those thousands of pounds annually contributed, He estimates them not by the weights of the merchant, but after the balances of the sanctuary.

Your love expressed in your gifts He values, but what are the mere silver and gold to Him? Funds, and encouraging accounts, and well-arranged machineries are well if they exist as the outgrowth of fervent love--but if they are the end-all, and the be-all--you miss the mark. Jesus would be better pleased with a grain of love than a heap of ostentatious service. The Martha spirit shows itself in the censuring of those persons who are careful about Christ's Word, who stand up for the doctrines of the Gospel, who desire to maintain the Ordinances as

they were delivered unto them, and who are scrupulous and thoughtful, and careful concerning the Truth as it is in Jesus.

In newspapers, on platforms, and in common talk, you frequently hear earnest disciples of Jesus and consistent Believers in His doctrines snubbed and denounced as unpractical. Theological questions are scouted as mere impertinences. Go in for Ragged schools, certainly. Reclaim the Arabs of the street, by all manner of means. Pass a compulsory education bill, certainly. Soup kitchens, free dinners--all excellent. We can all join in these. But never mention creeds and doctrines. Why, Man, you cannot be aware of the enlightenment of our times! What importance can now be attached to mere biblical dogmas and ordinances? Why contend as to whether Baptism shall be performed upon a babe or upon a Believer, whether it shall be by sprinkling or by immersion? What matters the Law of Christ in such a case?

These things would do for the schoolmen of the Dark Ages to fight about, but what can be the importance of such trifles in this highly enlightened nineteenth century? Yes, that is the exaggeration of Martha. Mary, treasuring up every word of Christ, Mary counting each syllable a pearl, is reckoned to be unpractical, if not altogether idle. That spirit, I fear, is growing in these times, and needs to be checked. After all, there is Truth and there is error, and charitable talk cannot alter the fact. To know and to love the Gospel is no mean thing. Obedience to Jesus, and anxiety to learn His will so as to please Him in all things are not secondary matters.

Contemplation, worship, and growth in Grace are not unimportant. I trust we shall not give way to the spirit which despises our Lord's teaching, for if we do--in prizing the fruit and despising the root--we shall lose the fruit and the root, too. In forgetting the great well-spring of holy activity, namely, personal piety, we shall miss the

streams, also. From the sincerity of faith and the fervor of love practical Christianity must arise. And if the food that faith and love feed upon is withdrawn. If sitting at the feet of Jesus is regarded as of secondary consequence, then both strength and will to serve the Lord will decline.

I dread much the spirit which would tamper with the Truth of God for the sake of united action, or for any object under Heaven--the latitudinarian spirit, which sneers at creeds and dogmas. Truth is no trifle. Our fathers did not think so, when, at the stake they gave themselves to death, or on the brown heather of Scotland fell beneath the swords of Claverhouse's dragoons for truths which nowadays men count unimportant, but which, being truths, were to them so vital that they would sooner die than suffer them to be dishonored. O for the same uncompromising love of the Truth! Would to God we could be both active and studious, and both learn with Mary and work with Martha!

The Martha spirit crops up in our reckoning so many things necessary. Martha believed that to entertain Christ there must be many things prepared. As to leaving one of those things out--it could not be. Our Lord would have been satisfied enough with the simplest fare--a piece of fish or of a honeycomb would well have contented Him. But no, according to Martha's judgment there must be this, and there must be that. So is it with many good people now. They have their ideas of excellence, and if these cannot be realized they despair of doing anything acceptable for Christ.

I believe an educated ministry to be desirable, but none the less do I deplore the spirit which considers it to be essential. In the presence of the fishermen of Galilee we dare not subscribe to the necessity which with some is beyond doubt. You must not, according to the talk of some, allow these earnest young people to set about preaching, and your

converted coal miners and fiddlers should be stopped at once. The Holy Spirit has in all ages worked by men of His own choosing. But some Churches today would not let Him if they could help it. Their pulpits are closed against the most holy and useful preachers if they have not those many things with which the Church nowadays cumbers her ministers and herself.

Then, my Brethren, to carry on a good work it is thought needful to have a Society and large funds. I also approve of the Society and the funds. I only regret that they should be so viewed as prime necessaries that few will stir without them. The idea of sending out a missionary with a few pounds in his hands as in the day's of Carey, is set down in many quarters as absurd. How can you save souls without a committee? How can London be evangelized till you have raised at least a million of money? Can you hope to see men converted without an annual meeting in Exeter Hall? You must have a secretary--there is no moving an inch till he is elected.

And know you not that without a committee you can do nothing? All these and a thousand things, which time fails me to mention, are now deemed to be necessary for the service of Jesus. It is such that a true-hearted soul who could do much for his Lord scarcely dares to move till he has put on Paul's armor of human patronage. O for Apostolic simplicity, going everywhere preaching the Word, and consecrating the labor of every Believer to soul-winning. To bring us back to first principles, "one thing is needful," and if by sitting at Jesus' feet we can find that one thing, it will stand us in better place than all the thousand things which custom now demands.

To catch the Spirit of Christ, to be filled with Himself--this will equip us for godly labor as nothing else can. May all Christians yet come to put this one thing first and foremost, and count the power of

deep piety to be the one essential
qualification for holy work. The censurable quality in the Martha spirit appears in the satisfaction which many feel with more activity. To have done so much preaching, or so much Sunday school teaching. To have distributed so many tracts, to have made so many calls by our missionaries--all this seems to be looked at as end rather than means. If there is so much effort put forth, so much work is done--is it not enough?

Our reply is, it is not enough. It is nothing without the Divine blessing. Brethren, where mere work is prized, and the inner life forgotten, prayer comes to be at a discount. The committee is attended, but the Prayer Meeting forsaken. The gathering together for supplication is counted little compared with the collecting of subscriptions. The opening prayer at public meetings is regarded as a very proper thing. But there are those who regard it as a mere formality, which might be very well laid aside, and, therefore, invariably come in after prayer is over. It will be an evil day for us when we trust in the willing and the running, and practically attempt to do without the Holy Spirit.

This lofty estimate of mere activity for its own sake throws the acceptance of our work into the shade. The Martha spirit says, if the work is done, is not that all? The Mary spirit asks whether Jesus is well-pleased or not. All must be done in His name and by His Spirit, or nothing is done. Restless service, which sits not at His feet, is but the clattering of a mill which turns without, grinding corn. It is but an elaborate method of doing nothing. I do not want less activity--how earnestly do I press you to it almost every Sunday. But I do pray that we may feel that all our strength lies in God and that we can only be strong as we are accepted of Christ. And we can only be accepted in

Christ as we wait upon Him in prayer, trust Him, and live upon Him.

You may compass sea and land to make your proselytes, but if you have not the Spirit of Christ you are none of His. You may rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, but unless you trust in the Lord your God, you shall not prosper. The joy of the Lord is your strength. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

Without Christ you can do nothing. Has He not told you, "He that abides in Me, and I in Him, the same brings forth much fruit"? Was it not written of old, "I am like a green fir tree: from Me is your fruit found"?

Once more, Martha's spirit is predominant in the Church of God to a considerable extent, now, in the evident respect which is paid to the manifest--and the small regard which is given to the secret. All regenerated persons ought to be workers for God and with God--but let the working never swamp the believing--never let the servant be more prominent than the Son! Never, because you conduct a class, or are chief man at a village station, forget that you are a sinner saved by Grace and have need, still, to be looking to the Crucified, and finding all your life in Him. You lose your strength as a worker if you forget your dependence as a Believer.

To labor for Christ is a pleasant thing, but beware of doing it mechanically. And this you can only prevent by diligently cultivating personal communion with Christ. My Brother, it may be you will undertake so much service that your time will be occupied and you will have no space for prayer and reading the Word. The half-hour in the morning for prayer will be cut short, and the time allotted for communion with God in the evening will be gradually entrenched upon by this engagement and the other occupation--and when this is the case I tremble for you. You are killing the steed by spurring it and denying

it food. You are undermining your house by drawing out the stones from the foundation to pile them at the top.

You are doing your soul serious mischief if you put the whole of your strength into that part of your life which is visible to men, and forget that portion of your life which is secret between you and your God. To gather up all in one, I fear there is a great deal among us of religious activity of a very inferior sort. It concerns itself with the external of service. It worries itself with merely human efforts and it attempts, in its own strength, to achieve Divine results. The real working which God will accept is that which goes hand in hand with a patient waiting upon Christ--with heart searching, with supplication, with communion--with a childlike dependence upon Jesus. With a firm adhesion to His Truth, with an intense love to His Person, and an abiding in Him at all seasons. May we have more of such things! Martha's spirit, though excellent in itself, so far as it goes, must not overshadow Mary's quiet, deep-seated piety, or evil will come of it.

II. Secondly, we observe that THE MARTHA SPIRIT INJURES TRUE SERVICE. Service may be true, and yet somewhat marred upon the wheel. Give your attention not so much to what I say, as to the bearing of it upon yourselves. It may be that you will find, as we speak, that you have been verily guilty touching these things. The Martha spirit brings the least welcome offering to Christ. It is welcome, but it is the least welcome.

Our Lord Jesus, when on earth, was more satisfied by conversing to a poor Samaritan woman than He would have been by the best meat and drink. In carrying on His spiritual work He had meat to eat that His disciples knew not of. Evermore His spiritual Nature was predominant over His physical Nature, and those persons who brought Him spiritual

gifts brought Him the gifts which He preferred. Here, then, was Martha's dish of well-cooked meat, but there was Mary's gift of a humble obedient heart. Here was Martha decking the table, but there was Mary submitting her judgment to the Lord, and looking up with wondering eyes as she heard His matchless speech.

Mary was bringing to Jesus the better offering. With Martha, He would, in His condescension, be pleased. But in Mary He found satisfaction. Martha's service He accepted benevolently, but Mary's worship He accepted with complacency. Now, Brothers and Sisters, all that you can give to Christ in any shape or form will not be so dear to Him as the offering of your fervent love, the clinging of your humble faith, the reverence of your adoring souls. Do not, I pray you, neglect the spiritual for the sake of the external, or else you will be throwing away gold to gather iron to yourself. You will be pulling down the palaces of marble that you may build for yourselves hovels of clay.

Martha's spirit has this mischief about it, also, that it brings self too much to remembrance. We would not severely judge Martha, but we conceive that in some measure she aimed at making the service a credit to herself as the mistress of the house. At any rate, self came up when she began to grow weary, and complained that she was left to serve alone. We also want our work to show well as our work. We like those who see it to commend it, and if none commend it, we feel that we are treated badly, and are left to work alone. Now, to the extent in which I think of myself in my service I spoil it. Self must sink, and Christ be All in All. John the Baptist's saying must be our motto, "He must increase, I must decrease." For Jesus' shoelace we are not worthy to unloose. Too much work and too little fellowship will always bring self into prominence. Self must be prayed down, and fellowship with Jesus must keep it down.

Martha seemed to fancy that what she was doing was necessary for Christ. She was cumbered about much serving because she thought it necessary that there should be a noble entertainment for the Lord. We are still too apt to think that Jesus wants our work, and that He cannot do without us. The preacher enquires what would become of the Church if he were removed! The deacon is suspicions that if he were taken away there would be a great gap left in the leadership of the Church. The teacher of a class feels that those children would never be converted, Christ would miss of the travail of His soul but for him. Ah, but a fly on St. Paul's Cathedral might as well imagine that all the traffic at his feet was regulated by his presence, and would cease, should he be removed. I love you to think that Christ will do much work by you, and to attach as much weight as you can to your responsibilities, but as to Jesus needing us--the thing is preposterous! Mary is much wiser when she feels, "He desires me to receive His words, and yield Him my love. I would gladly give Him meat, but He will see to that. He is the Master of all things, and can do without me or Martha. I need Him far more than He can need me."

We spoil our service when we overestimate its importance, for this leads us into loftiness and pride. Martha, under the influence of this high temper, came to complain of her sister, and to complain of her Lord, too, as if He were excusing her idleness. "Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" How it spoils what we do for Christ when we go about it with a haughty spirit! When we feel, "I can do this, and it is grand to do that"--am I not somewhat better than others? "Must not my Master think well of me?" The humble worker wins the day. God accepts the man who feels his nothingness, and out of the depths cries to Him.

But the great ones He will put down from their seat, and send the rich ones away empty. Activity, if not balanced by devotion, tends to puff us up and so to prevent acceptance with God. Martha also fell into an unbelieving vexation. Her idea of what was necessary to be done was so great that she found she could not attain to it. There must be this side dish, and there must be that principal meat. There must be this meat and that wine, it must be cooked just so many minutes. This must be done to a turn, and so on, and so on, and so on, and so on.

And now time flies and she fears yonder guest has been slighted. That servant is not back from the market. Many things go wrong when you are most anxious to have them right. You good housewives who may have had large parties to prepare for, know what these cares mean, I dare say.

And something of the sort troubled Martha so that she became fretful and unbelieving. She had a work to do beyond her strength, as she thought, and her faith failed her, and her unbelief went petulantly to complain to her Lord. Have we never erred in the same way? We must have that Sunday school excel-

lently conducted, that morning Prayer Meeting must be improved, that Bible class must be revived, our morning sermon must be a telling one, and so on!

The preacher here speaks of himself, for he sometimes feels that there is too much responsibility laid upon his shoulders, and he is very apt in reviewing his great field of labor to grow desponding in spirit. But when the preacher confessed that he spoke of himself, he only did so because he represents his fellow workers, and you also grow faint and doubtful. Alas, in such a case the enjoyment of service evaporates, the fretfulness which pines over details spoils the whole, and the worker becomes a mere drudge and scullion instead of an angel who does God's commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word.

Instead of glowing and burning like seraphs, our chariot wheels are taken off by our anxiety, and we drag heavily. Faith it is that secures acceptance, but when unbelief comes in, the work falls flat to the ground. At such times when the man or the Church shall become subject to the Martha spirit, the voluntary principle falls a little into disrepute. I believe the voluntary principle is the worst thing in all the world to work where there is no Divine Grace. But where there is Grace it is the one principle that God accepts.

Now, Martha would have Mary made to serve Christ. What right has she to be sitting down there? Whether she likes it or not, she must get up and wait like her sister. Martha's voluntary desire to do much leads her to think that Mary, if she has not quite such a voluntary love for the work, must be driven to it--must have a sharp word from Christ about it. So it is with us. We are so willing to contribute to the Lord's work that we wish we had ten thousand times as much to give. Our heart is warm within us, and we feel we would make no reserve--and then are so grieved with others because they give so very little that we wish we could compel them to give!

And so we would put their cankered money into the same treasury with the bright freewill offerings of the saints, as if the Lord would receive such beggarly pittances squeezed out by force in the same manner as He accepts the voluntary gifts of His people! It were wiser if we left those unwilling contributions to rust in the pockets of their owners. For in the long run I believe they do not help the cause--only that which is given out of a generous spirit, and out of love to Christ--will come up accepted before Him. Too readily do we get away from the free spirit when we get away from the right spirit. The fact is, the Martha spirit spoils all, because it gets us away from the inner soul of service, as I have said before, to the mere husks of

service.

We cease to do work as to the Lord, we labor too much for the service's sake. The main thing in our minds is the service, and not the Master. We are cumbered, and He is forgotten. Thus have I indicated as briefly as I could, some of the weaknesses of the Martha spirit.

III. Now for THE MARY SPIRIT. I have to show you that it is capable of producing the noble form of consecration to Christ. Its noble results will not come just yet. Martha's fruits ripen very quickly, Mary's take time. When Lazarus was dead, you will remember Martha ran to meet Christ, but Mary sat still in the house. Martha wanted her own time, Mary could take Christ's time. So after awhile, just before our Lord's death, we find that Mary did a grand thing--she did what Martha never thought of doing--she brought forth a box of precious ointment and poured it on the Lord's head, and anointed Him with ointment.

While she was sitting at Christ's feet, she was forming and filling the springs of action. You are not losing time while you are feeding the soul. While by contemplation you are getting purpose strengthened and motive purified, you are rightly using time. When the man becomes intense, when he gets within him principles vital, fervent, energetic--then when the season for work comes he will work with a power and a result which empty people can never attain--however busy they may be. If the stream flows at once, as soon as ever there is a shower, it must be little better than a trickling rivulet. But if the current stream is dammed up, so that for awhile nothing pours down the river bed, you will, in due time, when the waters have gathered strength, witness a torrent before which nothing can stand.

Mary was filling up the fountain head. She was listening and learning, feeding, edifying, loving, and growing strong. The engine of her soul was getting its steam ready, and when all was right, her action was

prompt and forcible. Meanwhile, the manner of her action was being refined. Martha's actions were good, but, if I may use the word, they were commonplace. She must make a great feed for the Lord Jesus, just as for any earthly friend. The spiritual nature of Christ she had forgotten, she was providing nothing for it. But Mary's estimate of Christ was of a truer order. She looked at Him as a Priest. She viewed Him as a Prophet. She adored Him as a King.

She had heard Him speak about dying, and had listened to His testimony about suffering, and dimly guessing what it meant, she prepared the precious spikenard that before the dying should come she might anoint Him. The woman's deed was full of meaning and of instruction. It was, indeed, an embodied poem. The odor that filled the house was the perfume of love and elevated thought. She became refined in her actions by the process of musing and learning. Those who think not, who meditate not, who commune not with Christ, will do commonplace things very well. But they will never rise to the majesty of a spiritual conception, or carry out a heart-suggested work for Christ.

That sitting of Mary was also creating originality of art. I tried, two Sundays ago, to enforce upon you the duty of originality of service as the right thing--that as we wandered, everyone in his own way, we should each serve God in his own way, according to our peculiar adaptation and circumstances. Now this blessed woman did so. Martha is in a hurry to be doing something--she does what any other admirer of Jesus would do--she prepares meat and a festival. But Mary does what but one or two besides herself would think of--she anoints Him--and is honored in the deed.

She struck out a spark of light from herself as her own thought, and she cherished that spark till it became a flaming act. I would that in the Church of God we had many Sisters at Jesus' feet who at last would

start up under an inspiration and say, "I have thought of something that will bring glory to God which the Church has not heard of before. And this will I put in practice, that there may be a fresh gem in my Redeemer's crown." This sitting at the Master's feet guaranteed the real spirituality of what she did. Did you notice when I read what the Master said concerning the pouring of the ointment upon Him, "She has kept this for My burial"?

He praised her for keeping it, as well as for giving it. I suppose that for months she had set apart that particular ointment, and held it in reserve. Much of the sweetest aroma of a holy work lies in its being thought over and brought out with deliberation. There are works to be done at once and straightway. But there are some other works to be weighed and considered. What shall I do to praise my Savior? There is a cherished scheme, there is a plan, the details of which shall be prayed out, and every single part of it sculptured in the imagination and realized in the heart. And then the soul shall wait, delighting herself in prospect of the deed, until the dear purpose may be translated into fact.

It is well to wait, expectantly saying, "Yes, the set time will come. I shall be able to do the deed. I shall not go down to my grave altogether without having been serviceable. It is not yet the time, it is not yet the appropriate season, and I am not quite ready for it myself. But I will add Grace to Grace and virtue to virtue, and I will add self-denial to self-denial, till I am fit to accomplish the one chosen work." So the Savior praised Mary that she had kept this--kept it till the fit moment came before His burial. And then, but not till then, she had poured out and revealed her love. Yes, it is not your thoughtless service, performed while your souls are half asleep--it is that which you do for Christ with eyes that overflow--with hearts that

swell with emotion. It is this that Jesus accepts.

May we have more of such service, as we shall have if we have more of sitting at His feet. Christ accepted her. He said she had chosen the good part which should not be taken from her. And if our work is spiritual, intense, fervent, thoughtful. If it springs out of fellowship. If it is the outgushing of deep principles, of inward beliefs, of solemn gratitude--then our piety shall never be taken from us--it will be an enduring thing. It will not be like the mere activities of Martha-- things that come and go.

I have thus worked out my text. I shall utter but two or three words upon the general applications of it. I shall apply it to three or four things very briefly. Brethren, I believe in our Nonconformity. I believe if ever England wanted Nonconformists it is now. But there is a tendency to make Nonconformity become a thing of externals, dealing with State and Church and politics. The political relations of Nonconformists--I believe in their value--I would not have a man less earnest upon them. But I am always fearful lest we should forget that Nonconformity is nothing if it is not spiritual-- and that the moment we, as Dissenters, become merely political or formal--it is all over with us.

Our strength is at the Master's feet, and I am afraid for our Nonconformity if it lives elsewhere. I mark so much conformity to the world, so much laxity of rule, so much love of novel opinions, that I tremble. I wish we could go back to Puritanism. We are getting too lax. There is too much worldliness and carnality among us. There is little fear of our being censured, even by the world, for being too Particular. I am afraid we are too much like the world for the world to hate us. As I pray that Nonconformity may always prevail in England, so I earnestly pray that she may stand because she abides near to Christ,

holds His Truth, prizes His Word, and lives upon Himself.

Now the like is true of missions. Apply the principle there. God bless missions. Our prayer goes up for them as warmly as for our soul's salvation. But the strength of missions must lie not so much in arrangements, in committees, in money, in men--as in waiting upon the Christ of God. We shall not do any more with a hundred thousand pounds than with a single thousand, unless we get more Divine Grace. We shall not have more souls won with fifty missionaries than with five, unless we get ten times the amount of power from the right hand of the Most High. The waking up in missions needs to begin in our Prayer Meetings, and in our Churches. In our personal wrestlings with God for the conversion of the heathen must lie the main strength of the workers that go out to do the deed. Let us remember this--Mary shall yet pour the box of ointment upon the head of the Anointed--Martha cannot do it.

The same thing is true in revivals. Persons will talk about getting up a revival--of all things I do believe one of the most detestable of transactions. "If you want a revival of religion," it is said, "you, must get Mr. So-and-So to preach"--with him I suppose is the residue of the Spirit. Oh, but if you want a revival, you must adopt the methods so long in vogue, and so well known as connected with such-and-such a revival! I suppose the Spirit of God is no more a free Spirit, then, as He used to be in the olden times. And whereas of old He breathed where He wished, you fancy your methods and plans can control Him. It is not so. It is not so in any degree.

The way to get the revival is to begin at the Master's feet! You must go there with Mary and afterwards you may work with Martha. When every Christian's heart is acting right by feeding on Christ's Word and drinking in Christ's Spirit, then will the revival come. When we had the long drought, some farmers watered their grass, but found it did

but very little good. An Irish gentleman remarked in my hearing that he had always noticed that when it rained there were clouds about, and so all the air was in right order for the descent of rain.

We have noticed the same, and it so happens that the clouds and general constitution of the atmosphere have much to do with the value of moisture for the herbs. It is no good watering them in the sun, the circumstances do not benefit them. So with revivals. Certain things done under certain circumstances become abundantly useful, but if you have not similar circumstances, you may use the same machinery, but mischief instead of good will follow. Begin yourself with the Master, and then go outward to His service, but plans of action must be secondary.

So too, lastly, if you want to serve God, as I trust you do, I charge you first be careful of your own souls. Do not begin with learning how to preach, or how to teach, or how to do this and that. Dear Friend, get the strength within your own soul, and then even if you do not know how to use it scientifically, yet you will do much. The first thing is to get the heart warmed! Stir up your manhood! Brace up all your faculties! Get the Christ within you--ask the everlasting God to come upon you! Get Him to inspire you--and then if your methods should not be according to the methods of others it will not matter. Or if they should, neither will it be of consequence,

Having the Power of the Holy Spirit, you will accomplish the results. But if you go about to perform the work before you have the strength from on High, you shall utterly fail. Better things we hope of you. God send them. Amen.

Chapter 20

A New Song For New Hearts

(No. 928)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me." Isaiah 12:1.

THIS prophesy is said by some to relate to the invasion by Sennacherib. That calamity threatened to be a very terrible display of Divine anger. It seemed inevitable that the Assyrian power would make an utter desolation of all Judea. But God promised that He would interpose for the deliverance of His people and punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria. And in that day His people should say, "We will praise You though You were angry with us, and therefore sent the Assyrian monarch to chastise us. Your anger is turned away, and You comfort us."

If this is the meaning of it, it is an instance of sanctified affliction--and it is a lesson to us that whenever we smart under the rod, we may look forward to the time when the rod shall be withdrawn. And it is also an admonition to us that when we escape from trial we should take care to celebrate the event with grateful praise. Let us set up the pillar of memorial, let us pour the oil of gratitude upon it, and garland it with song, blessing the Lord whose anger endures but for a moment, but whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

It is thought by others that this text mainly relates to the latter days, and I think it would be impossible to read the eleventh chapter without feeling that such a reference is clear. There is to be a time

when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice den. Then the Lord will set His hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of His people. Then He will repeat His wondrous works of Egypt and at the Red Sea, so that the song of Moses shall be rehearsed again, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him."

In that day the Jewish people upon whose head the blood of Christ has come, who these many centuries have been a people scattered and peeled, and sifted as in a sieve throughout all nations--even these shall be restored to their own land--and the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. They shall participate in all the glories of the millennial reign, and with joy shall they draw water out of the wells of salvation. In those days, when all Israel shall be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely, the jubilant thanksgiving shall be heard, "O Lord, I will praise You. For though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me."

The whole people shall sing with such unanimity, with such undivided heart that they shall speak as though they were but one man. They shall use the singular where their numbers might require the plural, "I will praise You," shall be the exclamation of the once divided but then united people!

Although both these interpretations are true, and both instructive, the text is many-sided and bears another reading. We shall find out the very soul of the passage if we consider it as an illustration of what occurs to every one of God's people when he is brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. When he is delivered from the spirit of bondage beneath Divine wrath and led by the Spirit of Adoption into the

liberty wherewith Christ makes him free. In that day I am sure these words are fulfilled. The Believer does then say right joyously, "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me."

In regarding the text from this point of view, we shall first observe the prelude of this delightful song. And then, secondly, we shall listen to the song itself.

I. First I shall ask your consideration of THE PRELUDE of this charming song. Here are certain preliminaries to the music. They are contained in the first line of the text. "In that day you shall say." Here we have the tuning of the harps, the notes of the music follow in the succeeding sentences. Much of instruction is couched in these seven words of prelude. Note then, first, there is a time for that joyous song which is here recorded. "In that day." The term, "that day," is sometimes used for a day of terror, and often for a period of blessing. The common term to both is this--they were both days of the manifestation of Divine power.

"That day," a day of terrible confusion to God's enemies. "That day," a day of great comfort to God's friends. The day being in either case the time of the making bare of God's arm and the manifestation of His strength. Now, the day in which a man rejoices in Christ is the day in which God's power is revealed on his behalf in his heart and conscience, and the Holy Spirit subdues him to the reign of Christ. It is not always that God works with such effectual power as this in the human heart--He has His set times. Oftentimes the word of human ministry proves ineffectual--the preacher exhorts, the hearer listens, but the exhortation is not obeyed. It sometimes happens that even desires may be excited, and yet nothing is accomplished, for these better feelings prove to be as those spring blossoms on the trees which

do not knit and fall fruitless to the ground.

There is, however, an appointed time for the calling of God's elect, a set time in which the Lord visits His chosen with a power of Grace which they cannot effectually resist. He makes them willing in the day of His power. It is a day in which not only is the Gospel heard, but our report is believed, because the arm of the Lord is revealed. To everything, according to Solomon, there is a season--a time to break down and a time to build up. A time of war, and a time of peace. A time to kill, and a time to heal. And even so, there is a time for conviction and a time for consolation.

With some who are in great distress of spirit, it may be God's time to wound and to kill. Their self-confidence is yet too vigorous, their carnal righteousness is yet too lively. Their confidences must be wounded, their righteousness must be killed. For otherwise they will not yield to Grace. God does not clothe us till He has stripped us. He does not heal till first He has wounded. How should He make alive those who are not dead? There is a work of Grace in the heart of digging out the foundations before Grace begins to build up our hopes--woe to that man who builds without having the foundation dug out--for his house will fall. Woe to that man who leaps into a sudden peace without ever having felt his need of pardon, without repentance, without brokenness of spirit. He shall see his hasty fruit wither before his eyes.

The time when God effectually blesses is sometimes called "a time of love." It is a time of deep distress to us, but it is a time of love with God--a time wisely determined in the decree and counsel of the Most High--so that healing mercy arrives at the best time to each one who is interested in the Covenant of Grace. Someone may enquire, "When do you think will be the time when God will enable me to say, 'Your anger is turned away'? " My dear Brother, you can easily discern it! I

believe God's time to give us comfort is usually when we are brought so low as to confess the justice of the wrath which He is pouring upon us. Humbleness of heart is one sure indication of coming peace. A German nobleman some years ago went over the galleys at Toulon. There he saw many men condemned by the French government to perpetual toil at the galley oar on account of their crimes. Being a prince in much repute, he obtained the favor that he should give liberty to one of the captives. He went about among them, and talked to them, but found in every case that they thought themselves wrongly treated, oppressed, and unrighteously punished. At last he met with one who confessed, "In my case my sentence is a most just and even a merciful one. If I had not been imprisoned in this way I should most likely have long ago been executed for some still greater crime. I have been a very great offender, and the law is doing nothing more than it ought to do in keeping me in confinement for the rest of my life."

The German nobleman returned to the manager of the galleys and said, "This is the only man in all this gang that I would wish to set free, and I elect him for liberty." It is so with our great Liberator, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He meets with a soul that confesses its demerit, owns the justice of Divine wrath, and has not a word to say for itself. Then He says, "Your sins which are many are forgiven you." The time when His anger is turned away is the time when you confess the justice of His anger, and bow down and humbly entreat Him for mercy. Above all, the hour of Grace has struck when you look ALONE to Christ. While you are looking to any good thing in yourself, and hoping to grow better, or to do better, you are making no advances towards comfort. But when you give up in despair every hope that can be grounded in yourself and look away to those dear wounds of His--to that suffering humanity of the Son or God who stooped from Heaven for you--then has

the day dawned wherein you shall say, "O Lord, I will praise You." I pray earnestly that this set time to favor you may be now come--the time when the rain is over, and the voice of the turtle is heard in your land.

Looking again at the preliminaries of this song you notice that a word indicates the singer. "In that day you shall say." "You." It is a singular pronoun, and points out one individual. One by one we receive eternal life and peace. "You," the individual, "you," singled out to feel in your conscience God's wrath. You are equally selected to enjoy Jehovah's love. Ah, Brethren, it is never a day of Grace to us till we are taken aside from the multitude and set by ourselves. Our individuality must come out in conversion--even if it never appears at any other time. You fancy, so many of you, that it is all right with you because you live in a Christian nation. I tell you it is woe unto you! Having outward privileges they involve you in responsibilities, but bring you no saving Grace.

Perhaps you fancy that your family religion may somewhat help you, and the erroneous practices of certain Christian Churches may foster this delusion, but it is not so. There is no birthright godliness--"You must be born again." The first birth will not help you, for, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Still, I know you fancy that if you mingle in godly congregations, and sing as they sing, and pray as they pray, it shall go well with you--but it is not so. The wicket gate of eternal life admits but one at a time. Is it not written, "You shall be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel"?

Don't you know that when the fountain is opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, it is declared by the Prophet Zechariah, "The land shall mourn, every family apart. The family of the house of

David apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart. The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart"! You must each one be brought to feel the Divine anger in your souls, and to have it removed from you, that you may rejoice in God as your salvation.

Has it been so with you, then, dear Hearer? Are you that favored singer? Are you one of that chosen throng who can say, "Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me"? Away with generals. Be not satisfied except with particulars. Little matters it to you that Christ should die for ten thousand men, if you have no part in His death. Little blessing is it to you that there should be joy from myriads of hearts because they are pardoned if you should die unpardoned! Seek a personal interest in Christ, and do not be satisfied unless in your own heart you have it satisfactorily revealed that your sin in particular is by an act of Grace put away.

I like to remember that this word, "you," is spoken to those who have been by sorrow brought into the last degree of despair. "In that day you shall say, though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away." You poor downtrodden Heart, where are you? You Woman of a sorrowful spirit, rejoice, for in that day of mercy you shall sing. You broken-hearted Sinner, ready to destroy yourself because of the anguish of conscience--in the day of God's abounding mercy you shall rejoice, even you--and your note shall be all the sweeter because you have had the most sin to be forgiven, and felt most the anger of God burning in your soul. Dwell on that, Mourners, and God grant it may be realized personally by yourselves.

The next thing to be noted in the preliminaries is the Teacher. "In

that day you shall say," who says this? It is God alone who can so positively declare, "you shall say." Who but the Lord can thus command man's heart and speech? It is the Lord alone. He who has made us is master of our spirits. By His Omnipotence He rules in the world of mind as well as matter, and all things happen as He ordains. He says, "In that day," that is, in God's own time, "you shall say." And He who thus declares will make good the word. Here is revealed God's will--and what the Lord wills shall be accomplished. What He declares shall be spoken, shall assuredly be spoken.

Here is consolation to those feeble folk who fear the Word will not be fulfilled. "You shall say," is a Divine Word and cannot fail. The Lord, alone, can give a man the right to say, "Your anger is turned away." If any man presumes to say, "God has turned His anger away from me," without a warrant from the Most High, that man lies to his own confusion. But when it is written, "You shall say," it is as though God had said, "I will make it true, so that you shall be fully justified in the declaration." Yet more comfort is here, for even when the right to such a blessing is bestowed, we are often unable to enjoy it because of weakness.

Unbelief is frequently so great that many things which are true we cannot receive. Under a sense of sin we are so desponding that we think God's mercy too great for us. And therefore we are not able to appropriate the blessing presented to us, though it is inexpressibly delightful. Blessed be God, the Holy Spirit knows how to chase away our unbelief and give us power to embrace the blessing! He can make us accept the Covenant favor and rejoice in it so as to avow the joy.

There are some of you whom I have tried to induce to believe comfortable truths about yourselves, but you have fairly defeated me. I have put the Gospel plainly to you, for I have felt sure that its

promises were meant for you. And I have said within my heart, "Surely they will be comforted this morning. Certainly their broken hearts will be bound up by that gracious Word." But oh, I cannot make you say, "Lord, I will praise You." I am unable to lead you to faith and peace. Here, however, is my joy--my Master can do what His servant cannot! He can make the tongue of the dumb sing. He delights to look after desperate cases. Man's extremity becomes His opportunity.

Where the most affectionate words of ours fail, the consolations of His blessed Spirit are divinely efficacious. He cannot merely bring the oil and the wine, but He knows how to pour them into the wounds and heal the anguish of the contrite spirit. I pray the Master that He who alone can teach us to sing this song may graciously instruct those of you who have been seeking rest these many months, and finding none. "I am the Lord which teaches you to profit." He can put a song into your mouth, for nothing is beyond the range of Divine Grace.

Once more. "In that day you shall say." Here is another preliminary of the song, namely, the tone of it. "You shall say, O Lord, I will praise You." The song is to be an open one, avowed, vocally uttered, heard of men and published abroad. It is not to be a silent feeling--a kind of soft music whose sweetness is spent within the spirit. No. In that day you shall say, you shall speak it outright, you shall testify and bear witness to what the Lord has done for you! When a man gets his sins forgiven he cannot help revealing the secret. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing."

Even if the forgiven one could not speak with his tongue, he could say it with his eyes--his countenance, his man-ner--his very gait would betray him! The gracious secret would ooze out in some fashion. Spiritual men, at any rate, would find it out, and with thankfulness

mark the joyful evidences. I know that before I found the Savior, had you known me, you would have observed my solitary habits. And if you had tracked me to my chamber, and to my Bible, and my knees, you would have heard groans and sighs which betokened a sorrowful spirit. The ordinary amusements of youth had in those days few attractions for me, and conversation, however cheerful, yielded me no comfort.

But that very morning that I heard the Gospel message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth," I am certain that no person who knew me could have helped remarking the difference even in my face! A change came over my spirits, which as I remember was even indicated in the way in which I walked, for the heavy step of melancholy was exchanged for a more cheerful pace. The spiritual condition affects the bodily state, and it was evidently so with me. My delight at being forgiven was no ordinary sensation, I could have fairly leaped for joy!--

"All through the night I wept full sore,
But morning brought relief.
That hand which broke my bones before,
Then broke my bonds of grief.
My mourning He to dancing turns,
For sackcloth joy He gives,
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,
But long Your favor lives."

If I had not avowed my deliverance the very stones must have cried out! It was not in my heart to keep it back, but I am sure I could not have done so if I had desired. God's Grace does not come into the heart as a beggar into a barn, and lie hidden away as if it stole a night's lodging. No, its arrival is known all over the house, and every chamber of the soul testifies its presence! Grace is like a bunch of

lavender--it discovers itself by its sweet smell. Like the nightingale it is heard where it is not seen. Like a spark which falls into the midst of straw it burns, and blazes, and consumes, and so reveals itself by its own energetic operations.

O Soul, burdened with sin, if Christ does but come to you, and pardon you, I will be bound for it that before long all your bones shall say, "Lord, who is like unto You?" You will be of the same mind as David, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness." You will gladly say with him, "Your vows are upon me, O God: I will render praise unto You, for You have delivered my soul from death." Not only will you soberly tell what great things Divine Grace has worked for you, but it will be very unlikely that your exuberant joy may lead you beyond the bounds of solemn decorum.

The precise and slow going will condemn you, but you need not mind, for you can offer the same excuse for it as David made to Michal when he danced before the ark. Far be it from me to condemn you, should you cry, "Hallelujah," or clap your hands! It is our cold custom to condemn every demonstration of feeling, but I am sure Scripture does not warrant us in our condemnation. For we find such passages as these, "O clap your hands, all you people! Shout unto God with the voice of triumph." "Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals." What if the overflowing of holy joy should seem to be disorderly, what matters it if God accepts it? He who has long been in prison, when he gets his liberty may well take a frisk or two, and an extra leap for joy, and who shall begrudge him?

He who has long been hungry and famished, when he sees the table spread, may be excused if he falls to with more of eagerness than politeness. Oh, yes, they shall say it, they shall say it, "I will

praise You, O Lord!" In the very disorderli-ness of their demonstration they shall the more emphatically say, "I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away." Thus much on the prelude of the song. Now let us hear the song itself.

II. In THE SONG ITSELF I would call to your notice the fact that all of it is concerning the Lord. It is all addressed to Him. "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry, Your anger is turned away." When a soul escapes from the bondage of sin and becomes consciously pardoned, it resembles the Apostles on the Mount Tabor, of whom we spoke the other Sunday morning. It sees no man, save Jesus only. While you are seeking Grace you think much of the minister, the service, the outward form--but the moment you find peace in God through the precious blood of Christ--you will think of your pardoning God only.

Oh, how small everything becomes in the presence of that dear Cross where God the Savior loved and died! When we think of all our iniquity being cast into the depth of the sea we can no more boast of anything that was once our glory. The instrumentality by which peace came to us will be always dear to us. We shall esteem the preacher of the Gospel who brings salvation to us to be our spiritual father--but still we shall never think of praising him--we shall give all the glory to our God. As for ourselves, self will sink like lead amidst the waters when we find Christ. God will be All in All when iniquity is pardoned.

I have often thought that if some of my Brethren who preach a Gospel in which there is little of the Grace of God had felt a little more conviction of sin in being converted, they would be sure to preach a clearer and more gracious Gospel. Many nowadays appear to leap into peace without any convictions of sin--they do not seem to have known what the guilt of sin means. They scramble into peace before the burden of sin has been felt. It is not for me to judge, but I must confess I

have my fears of those who have never felt the terrors of the Lord. And I look upon conviction of sin as a good groundwork for a well-instructed Christian.

I observe, as a rule, that when a man has been put in the prison of the Law. When he has been made to wear the heavy chains of conviction, and at last obtains his liberty through the precious blood of Christ, he is pretty sure to cry up the Grace of God and magnify Divine mercy. He feels that in his case salvation must be of Grace from first to last. And he naturally favors that system of theology which magnifies most the Grace of God. Those who have not felt this--whose conversion has been of the more easy kind, produced rather by excitement than by depth of thought--seem to me to choose a flimsy divinity in which man is more prominent, and God is less regarded.

I am sure of this one thing--that I personally desire to ascribe conversion in my own case entirely to the Grace of God--and to give God the glory of it. And I dread that conversion which could in any degree deprive God of being in His everlasting decrees the cause of it, by His effectual Spirit the direct Agent of it, by His continued working through the Holy Spirit the Perfecter of it. Give God the praise, my Brethren. You must do so if you have thoroughly experienced what God's anger means, and what the turning away of it means.

The next thing in this song is that it includes repentant memories. "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me." There was a time when God was to our consciousness angry with us. When was that? And how did we know that God was angry with us? Outsiders think when we talk about conversion that we are merely talking of sentimental theories. But let me assure you that it is as much matter offact to us with regard to our spiritual nature, as your feelings of sickness and of recovery are real and actual to you. Time was when some of us read

the Word of God, as we read it, believing it to be an Inspired Book, we perceived that it contained a Law, holy and just--the breach of which was threatened with eternal death.

As we read it we discovered that we had broken that Law, not in some points, but in all. And we were obliged, as we read it, to feel that all the sentences of that Book against sinners were virtually sentences against us. We may perhaps have read these chapters before, but we had given them no serious thought until on this occasion we were led to see that we stood condemned by the Law of God as contained in Holy Scripture. Then we felt that God was angry with us. It was not a mere idea of ours--we had this Book in evidence of it. If that Book were indeed true, we felt we were condemned. We dared not think the old Book to be a cunningly devised fable. We knew it was not, and therefore from its testimony we concluded that God was angry with us.

At the same time we learned this terrible Truth from the Book--our conscience suddenly awoke and confirmed the fact, for it said--"What the Book declares is correct. The just God must be angry with such a sinful being as you are." Conscience brought to our recollection many things which we would gladly have forgotten. It revealed to us much of the evil of our hearts which we had no wish to know. And thus, as we looked at Scripture by the light of conscience, we concluded in ourselves that we were in a very dreadful plight, and that God was angry with us. Then there entered into us at the same time, over and above all the rest, a certain work of the Holy Spirit called conviction of sin.

"When He, the Spirit of Truth is come," He shall convict the world of sin. He has come. And He has convicted us of sin in a way in which the Scripture would not have done apart from Him--and our conscience would not have done apart from Him. But His light shone in upon us and we

felt as we never felt before. Then sin appeared exceedingly sinful, as it was committed against Infinite Love and goodness. Then it appeared to us as though Hell must soon swallow us up--and the wrath of God must devour us. Oh, the trembling and the fear, the dismay and the alarm which then possessed our spirits! And yet, my Brethren, at this very time, the remembrance of it is cause for thankfulness.

In the Hebrew, the wording of our text is slightly different from what we get in the English. Our English translators have very wisely put in the word "though," a little earlier than it occurs in the Hebrew. The Hebrew would run something like this, "O Lord, I will praise You: You were angry with me." Now we do this day praise God that He made us feel His anger. "What?" you say. "What? Is a sense of anger a cause for praise?" No, my Brethren, not if it stood alone, but because it has driven us to Christ. If wrath had been laid up for us hereafter, it would be a cause of horror, deep and dread. But that it was let loose in measure upon us here, and that we were thus condemned in conscience that we might not be condemned at last is reason for much thankfulness. We should never have felt His love if we had not felt His anger. We laid hold on His mercy because of necessity. No soul will accept Christ Jesus until it must. It is not driven to faith until it is driven to self-despair. God's angry face makes Christ's loving face dear to us. We would never look at the Christ of God, unless first of all the God of Christ had looked at us through the tempest and made us afraid. "I will praise You, that You did let me feel Your anger, in order that I might be driven to discover how that anger could be turned away." So you see the song in its deep bass note includes plaintive recollections of sin pressing heavily on the spirit.

The song of our text contains in itself blessed certainties. "I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away."

Can a man know that? Can a man be quite sure that he is forgiven? Yes, that he can. He can be as sure of pardon as he is of his existence, as infallibly certain as he is of a mathematical proposition. "No," says one, "but how is it?" My Brother, albeit that this is a matter for spiritual men, yet at the same time it is a matter of certainty as clearly as anything can be ascertained by human judgment. The confidence of a man's being pardoned, and God's anger being turned away from him is not based upon his merely feeling that it is so. Nor his merely believing that it is go.

You are not pardoned because you work yourself up into a comfortable frame of mind and think you are pardoned. That may be a delusion. You are not necessarily delivered from God's anger because you believe you are--you may be believing a lie, and may believe what you like--but that does not make it true. There must be a fact going before, and if that fact is not there, you may believe what you choose, but it is pure imagination, nothing more.

On what ground does a man know that God's anger is turned away? I answer thus, on the ground of this Book. "It is written," is our basis of assurance. I turn to this Book, and I discover that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world and became the Substitute for a certain body of men. That He took their sins, and was punished in their place in order that God, without the violation of His justice, might forgive as many as are washed in Christ's blood. My question then is, for whom did Christ die? The moment I turn to the Scriptures, I find very conspicuously on its page this declaration, that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

I am a sinner, that I am clear of. That gives me some hope. But I next find that, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Looking to myself I find that I do really believe, that is, I trust Jesus. Very

well, then, I am sure I am not condemned, for God has declared I am not. I read again, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I know that I have believed, that is to say, trusted--I trust my salvation with Christ. And I have also, in obedience to His command been baptized--then I am saved, and shall be saved, for it says so. Now this is a matter of Testimony which I receive. He that believes in Christ receives the Testimony of God--and that is the only Testimony he wants.

I know it has been thought that you get some special revelation in your own soul--some flash, as it were, of light-- some extraordinary intimation. But nothing of the kind is absolutely needed. I know that the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God. But the first essential matter is God's witness in the Word. "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar, because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." God's witness concerning His Son is this--that if you trust His Son you are saved. His Son suffered for you. His Son bore the punishment that was due for your sins--God declares it--that you are forgiven for Christ's sake.

He cannot punish twice for one offense--first His Son and then you. He cannot demand retribution from His Law to vindicate His justice, first from your Substitute and then from you. Was Christ your Substitute? That is the question. He was if you trust Him--your trusting Him is the evidence that He was a Substitute for you. Now see, then, the moment I, being under His anger, have come to trust my soul forever in the hands of Christ, God's anger is turned away from me because it was turned upon Christ. And I stand, guilty sinner as I am in myself, absolved before God--and feel that none can lay anything to my charge, for my sins were laid on Christ, and punished upon Christ--and I am clear.

And now what shall I say unto the Lord, but, "I will praise You: for

though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me." It is a matter of certainty. It is not a matter of "if," "and," or "but." It is a fact. This morning you are either forgiven or you are not. You are either clean in God's sight or else the wrath of God abides on you. And I beseech you, do not rest till you know which it is. If you find out that you are unforgiven, seek the Savior. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But if you believe in Him, you are no longer guilty--you are forgiven. Do not sit down and fret as if you were guilty, but enjoy the liberty of the children of God. Being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ your Lord.

Time fails me, but I must add that our song includes holy resolutions--"I will praise You." I will do it with my heart in secret. I will get alone and make my expressive silence sing Your praise. I will sit and pour out liquid songs in tears of gratitude, welling up from my heart. I will praise You in the Church of God, for I will search out other Believers, and I will tell them what God has done for me. I will cast in my lot with Your people--if they are despised, I will bear the shame with them--and count it honor. I will unite myself to them, and help them in their service. And if I can magnify Christ by my testimony among them, I will do it.

I will praise You in my life. I will make my business praising You. I will make my parlor and my drawing room, I will make my kitchen and my fields praise You. I will not be content unless all I am and all I have shall praise You. I will make a harp of the whole universe. I will make earth and Heaven, space and time to be but strings upon which my joyful fingers shall play lofty tunes of thankfulness. I will praise You, O my God! My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise-- and when I shall die, or rather pass from this life to another, I who have been forgiven

so much sin through such a Savior, will, by Your Grace, continue to praise You--

"Oh, how I long to join the choir Who worship at His feet! Lord, grant me soon my heart's desire! Soon, soon Your work complete!"

Note once more that this is a song which is peculiar in its character, and appropriate only to the people of God. I may say of it, "no man could learn this song but the redeemed." He only who has felt his vileness, and has had it washed away in the "fountain filled with blood," can know its sweetness. It is not a Pharisee's song--it has no likeness to, "God I thank You that I am not as other men." It confesses, "You were angry with me," and there owns that the singer was even as others. But it glories that through infinite mercy the Divine anger is turned away. And herein it leans on the appointed Savior.

It is not a Sadducean song, no doubt mingles with the strain. It is not the philosopher's query, "There may be a God, or there may not be," it is the voice of a believing worshipper. It is not, "I may be guilty, or I may not be." It is all posi-

tive, every note of it. "You were angry with me." I know it, I feel it, yet, "Your anger is turned away." Of this, too, I am sure. I believe it upon the witness of God! I cannot doubt His Word. It is a song of strong faith, and yet of humility. Its spirit is a precious incense made up of many costly ingredients. We have, here, not one virtue, alone, but many rare excellences.

Humility confesses, "You were angry with me." Gratitude sings, "Your anger is turned away." Patience cries, "You comfort me," and holy joy springs up, and says, "I will praise You." Faith, hope, and love all have their notes here, from the bass of humility up to the highest alto of glorious communion, all the different parts are represented. It is a full song--the swell of the diapason of the heart!

I have done when I have said just these words by way of practical result from the subject. One is a word of consolation--consolation to you who are under God's anger this morning. My heart goes out after you. I know what your sorrow is. I knew it by the space of five years at a time--when I mourned the guilt and curse of sin. Ah, poor Soul, you are in a sad plight, indeed. But be of good cheer! You have in your bosom, if you will believe me, a key which will open every lock in Doubting Castle wherein you are now confined. If, Man, you have but heart to take it out of your bosom, and out of the Word of God--and use it--liberty is near.

I will show you that key--look at it, "Him that comes unto Me I will in no wise cast out." "Oh, but that does not happen to fit," you say. Well, here's another--"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin." Does not that meet your case? Then let me try again--"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." "To the uttermost"--dwell on that and be comforted! I never knew God to shut a soul up in the prison of conviction but He sooner or later released the captive. The Lord will surely bring you out of the low dungeon of conviction. The worst thing in the world is to go unchastened--to be allowed to sin and eat honey with it--this is the precursor of damnation.

But to sin, and have the wormwood of repentance with it--this is the prelude of being saved! If the Lord has embittered your sin, He has designs of love towards you. His anger shall yet be turned away. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them. I the God of Israel will not forsake

them."

The next is a word of admonition. Some of you have been forgiven, but

are you praising God as you should? I have heard say that in our Churches there are no more than five per cent who are doing any real work for Christ. That is not true of this Church. I should be very sorry if it were, but I fear there are more than five per cent who are doing nothing. Where are you who have felt His anger pass away, and yet are not praising Him? Come, bestir yourself, bestir yourself! Seek to serve Jesus! Do you not know that you are meant to be the winners of souls?

The American bee keeper, when he wants to collect a hive, catches first a single bee. He puts it in a box with a piece of honeycomb and shuts the door. After awhile, when it is well fed, he lets it out. It comes back again after more of the sweet, but it brings companions with it. And when they have eaten the honey they always bring yet a more numerous band, so by-and-by there is a goodly muster for the hive. After this fashion ought you to act. If you have found mercy, you ought to praise God and tell others, so that they may believe. And in their turn lead others to Jesus. This is the way the kingdom of God grows. I am afraid you are guilty here. See to it, dear Brother. See to it, dear Sister--and who can tell of what use you may yet be? There was a dear servant of Christ who was just on the borders of the grave, very old and very ill, and frequently delirious, so that the doctors said no one must go into the chamber except the nurse. A little Sunday school boy, who was rather curious, peeped in at the door to look at the minister, and the poor dying servant of God saw him, and the ruling passion was strong in death. He called him. "David," said he, "did you ever close in with Christ? I have done so many a time, and I long that you may." Fifty years after, that boy was living and bearing testimony that the dying words of the good man had brought him to Jesus--for by them he was led to close in with Christ.

You do not know what half a word might do if you would but speak it! O keep not back the good news that might bring salvation to your wife, to your husband, to your child, to your servant! If you have, indeed, felt the Lord's anger pass away this morning, go home to your chamber, and on your knees repeat this vow, "My God, I will praise You! I have been a sluggard, I have been very silent about You. I am afraid I have not given You of my substance as I ought. I am sure I have not given You of my heart as I should. But oh, forgive the past, and accept Your poor servant yet again. 'Then I will praise You. For though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.' "

God bless you, for Christ's sake.

Chapter 21

The Model Home Mission and the Model Home Missionary

(No. 929)

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

"Who went about doing good." Acts 10:38.

In aid of the Funds of the Baptist British and Irish Home Missionary Society.

OUR Lord's public ministry on earth was a Home Mission. He Himself said to His disciples, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He went to the very borders of the Holy Land. But there He stayed, and north and south, east and west, in all directions, in towns and in villages, He itinerated preaching to His own countrymen. Afterwards there sprang out of His home work what may be called the foreign Mission, when they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Gospel.

And thus the blessing of Israel became a blessing to all nations. It was always the Lord's intention that the Gospel should be preached to every creature under Heaven, but, so far as His own work was concerned, He began at home. And herein we see His wisdom, for it will be of little avail to attempt much abroad unless there is a solid basis at home, in an earnest sanctified Church, affording a fulcrum for our lever. We want to see England converted to Christ, and then shall she become the great herald of Christ's Gospel to other lands.

As things now are, our soldiers and sailors are, too often, witnesses against the Gospel. And our travelers of all grades in foreign countries too frequently give an impression very unfavorable to the

Cross of Christ. We want to have this nation saturated through and through with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. We want all its darkness chased away and the true light made to shine--then Missionary operations will receive a wonderful impetus. God will make His Truth to be known in all nations when He has first caused His face to shine upon His chosen.

We shall now speak about Home Mission work under two heads. First, we have before us a Model Home Mission. And secondly a model Home Missionary. When we have talked about these two things, we shall press a third point, namely, the duty of imitating the works of the great Master.

I. First, then, we have before us A MODEL HOME MISSION. We see sketched in the text the great Home Mission which was conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ, "who went about doing good." I am sure we shall learn much if we consider the way in which He conducted that enterprise.

In commencing His work He selected as His great instrument the preaching of the Gospel. The Lord had anointed Him to preach the Gospel. He performed thousands of gracious actions. He officiated in many ways for the good of His fellow men, and for the glory of God. But His Throne on earth, if I might so speak, was the pulpit. It was when He began to declare the Gospel of the kingdom that His true glory was seen. "Never man spoke like this Man."

Brethren, He would have His followers depend upon the same agency. The scattering of religious books and the institution of schools and other godly efforts are not to be neglected. But first and foremost it pleases God by the foolishness ofpreaching to save them that believe. The cardinal duty of the Christian Church is thus laid down, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Notwithstanding all that may be said about the advance of the times,

and the non-adaptation of the pulpit to this present age, we shall be very foolish if we imagine that we have found a better instrumentality than that which Jesus selected and which His Father so highly blessed. Let us stand to our preaching like soldiers to their guns. The pulpit is the Thermopylae of Christendom where our foes shall receive a check. The field of Waterloo on which they shall sustain a defeat. Let us preach, and preach evermore. Let us continue sounding, even if it is but the rams' horns, for by-and-by the walls of Jericho shall fall flat to the ground. Preach, preach, preach!

The Master's life clearly tells us that if we would save souls and glorify God we must constantly proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom. In connection with His own personal preaching, we find the Master forming a seminary for the training of ministers. Those who have, at any time, thought properly conducted collegiate institutions to be unscriptural can hardly understand the action of our Lord in retaining under His own eyes a band of scholars, who afterwards became teachers. After He had called Peter and John, and some few others, He at first admitted them, as it were, into His evening classes. For they pursued their ordinary business, and came to Him at fitting seasons for instruction.

But after awhile they separated themselves from all the pursuits of business, and were continual with their great Teacher. They learned how to preach as they marked how He preached. He even taught them to pray, as John also taught his disciples. Many dark subjects which He did not explain to the people, we are told He opened up to the disciples. He took them aside and gave them the mysteries of the kingdom, while to the rest of the people the Truth was only spoken in parables.

Now, this has been too much forgotten in the Church, and needs to be brought to our remembrance. Among the Vaudois and the Waldenses, every

pastor of the Church was always intensely earnest to find out others who would become pastors--therefore each one had a young Brother under his care. In the journeys of the shepherds of the Vaudois Church, as they passed from crag to crag, each one of the venerable men was usually accompanied by some strong young mountaineer, who, in return for the physical help which he gave to the venerable father, received instruction from him in the doctrines of the Gospel, in Church government, and in other things which appertained to the ministry.

In this way the Israel of the Alps was enabled to perpetuate its testimony, and the office of the preacher of the Gospel never fell into disuse. When in the days of the blessed Reformation, Calvin and Luther exerted an influence over Europe, it was not only through their own preaching, mighty as that was--nor through their writings--though these were scattered broadcast like the leaves of autumn. It was also through the innumerable young men who swarmed at Wurtenburg and came together at Geneva to listen to the great Reformers' teaching and then afterwards went forth themselves into other lands to tell abroad what they had learned.

Our Master sets before us the fact that no fitter instrument for spreading the Gospel can be devised than a man raised up by God to speak the Gospel who is able to attract to his feet others who shall catch his spirit, profit by his example, receive his doctrines, and go forth to preach the same Word.

It would be correct to add that the Master also connected with His preaching and His college the invaluable agency of Bible classes. Indeed, I believe that the whole machinery of a zealous Christian Church can be found in embryo in the doings of Christ. And if His blessed life of holy labor were more thoroughly studied, new organizations for enlightening the world and for building up the Church

would soon be thought of, and the best results would follow. Our Lord talked to His disciples--occasionally one by one, sometimes when He found them in pairs. And at other seasons He addressed the Apostles as a whole, " expounding unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

The Apostles were evidently well acquainted with the Scriptures, and yet I do not suppose that all the population of Palestine were so well trained. They must, therefore, have learned of Jesus. Peter's first sermon shows his acquaintance with the Old Testament, and the speech of Stephen manifests remarkable familiarity with Scripture history. Such knowledge was not, I think, general, but was the result of constant communion with a Teacher whose references to the Inspired Volume were so constant. His readings of the holy Book, His interpretations, His quotations, His illustrations all tended to make His disciples men well instructed in the Law and the Prophets.

And the inmost meaning of the Word was laid bare to them in the Person of their Lord Himself. If any Home Mission would see its work established, so as to endure the test of years, next to the ordinance of preaching, its ministry must be careful to exercise diligence in training up the converts in the knowledge of the written Word. The Bible must be read intelligently and its meaning clearly set forth. The memory must become familiar with its very words, and the heart with its inner spirit. We must seek gracious men and women who will labor in this needful ministry.

No minister can afford to neglect the constant Scriptural tuition of his people, and if he is negligent of it, do not be surprised if grievous wolves enter into the Church and devour the flock. That our young men and women may not be carried about with every wind of doctrine, but may be steadfast, unmovable--is our bounden duty to

instruct them in the Divine Word with laborious care and constancy.
Notice, moreover, that our Lord's Mission work did not overlook the children. Our noble system of Sunday school work is not only justified, but even enforced by the example and precept of our Lord when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven."
And also by His saying to Peter, "Feed My lambs." The injunctions which bid us look after our adult converts who come under the denomination of "sheep," are no more valid than the command which bids us took after the young, and the tender, who are intended by the term "lambs." True Mission work, therefore, if any of you will undertake it, must carefully regard children. Moses would not leave even the little ones in Egypt. Even the youthful Israelites ate of the paschal lamb. Our work is sadly faulty if it has no bearing upon the young men and maidens, the boys and the girls.
I am afraid that much of our public preaching is blameworthy in this respect. I feel, myself, that I do not say as much in my general sermons as I ought to do to the children of my congregation. I do insert stories and parables here and there, but if I shall ever reach my own ideal of preaching, I shall far more frequently let fall handfuls on purpose for the young. Sermons should be like a Mosaic, and the sparkling pieces which catch the infant eyes should abound. Our discourses should be as Isaiah says, "wine and milk"--wine for men and milk for babes. Out of our pulpits we must be the friends of the children, for then we trust they will grow up to be friends to us and to our Master. Our model Mission bends its strength to the cultivation of juvenile piety, and makes this department of effort second to none.
We now proceed a step farther. Of late there has been frequently used by earnest Evangelists in the more populous parts of London the plan of

free teas, free breakfasts, and free dinners--at which the poorest persons are brought together and fed, and are then affectionately exhorted to seek salvation. It is remarkable that this method has been so long disused, because it is, with a small difference, a plan adopted by our Lord. On two occasions at least, He spread a free repast for thousands of the famishing, disdaining not to provide food for the bodies of those whose souls He had blessed with the Word of Life.

On those two occasions the generous Master of the feast gave His crowd of guests a good substantial meal of bread and fish. I have often wondered why those two viands were in each case selected, perhaps it was that both land and sea should be declared to be the storehouse of Providence. He gave not bread alone. His fare was not stingy. He would not merely stay their hunger, but He would afford them a relish to their bread, and therefore He gave them bread and fish. Agreeable, sufficient, healthful and satisfying refreshment the Lord dispensed at His table in the wilderness.

Though many, no doubt, followed Him because they did eat of those loaves and fishes, yet I do not doubt that some who were first attracted by the earthly food remained to eat of the Bread of Heaven, and embraced those precious Truths which at first were foolishness unto them. Yes, my Friends, if we want to get at our starving people, if we would reach the most degraded and the poorest of the poor, we must use such means as these, for Jesus did.

A Mission would also find great strength in imitating Jesus by combining medical aid with religious teaching. Our Lord was a medical Missionary--He not only preached the Gospel, but He opened the eyes of the blind, cured those who were afflicted with fevers, made the lame to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. You may say that all this was miracle. I grant it, but the mode of performing the cure

is not the point in hand. I am speaking of the thing itself. True enough is it that we cannot work miracles, but we may do what is within human reach in the way of healing, and so we may follow our Lord, not with equal footsteps, but in the same track.

I rejoice to see in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, and also in London, the establishment of Medical Missions. I believe that in some parts of London nothing would be so likely to do good to the people as to make the vestry a dispensary, and the godly surgeon a deacon of the Church, if not an Evangelist. It may one day be thought possible to have deaconesses whose self-denying nursing of the sick poor shall introduce the Gospel into the meanest hovels. At any rate, there should be associated with the City Missionary, with the Bible-woman, and with Home Missions everywhere, to as great a degree as may be possible, the earnest aid of beloved physicians and men learned in the healing art, who should seek to do good to men's eyes, and ears, and legs, and feet, while others of us look to their spiritual infirmities.

Many a young man who goes forth as a minister of Christ would do much more good if he understood a little anatomy and medicine. He might be a double blessing to a remote hamlet or to a district crowded with the poor. I pray for a closer connection between the surgeon and the Savior. I would invoke the aid of truly believing members of the faculty. May there be many who, like Luke, are both physicians and Evangelists. Perhaps some Christian young man walking the hospitals, and fearing God, may find in these hints a guide as to his future career.

In addition to this, let me say that our Lord Jesus Christ also associated with His Mission-work the distribution of alms. He was very poor. Foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but He, the Son of Man, had not where to lay His head. Out of the gifts of the

faithful who ministered to His necessities there was but little to spare. These gifts were put into a bag and entrusted to Judas, and we discover, incidentally, that the Master was likely to distribute from this slender store to the poor around Him. Brethren, it is to be feared that some Churches fall behind in this matter of almsgiving, a matter which at the Judgment Day will occupy a very conspicuous place, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat."

The Romish Church has abounded in the practice of almsgiving, and if her mode of distributing were as wise as her manner of contributing is generous, she would deserve much commendation in this respect. Brethren, because we feel that we are justified by faith and not by works, are we to cease from good works and suffer the giving of alms to drift into the background? Such is now the rage for centralization, and so eager are some for the suppression of all personal charity that it may one day become an indictable offense to give away a sixpence to a starving woman until you have consulted the police, the Poor Law Board, or some association for giving away paper tickets instead of bread. Public opinion demands the publication of all our gifts, and ignores the old-fashioned command, "Let not your right hand know what your left hand does." We are all to be made wheels in the engine of a society to give our alms by clock work, and relieve the poor by machinery. For one, I shall always recommend Christian people to be a little eccentric in their benevolence. Without decrying societies, I shall urge godly men to judge for themselves as to the poverty of each case, and to give for themselves, apart from those various associations which cut and dry benevolence till it becomes a mere skeleton.

I am a firm believer in the Gospel of the barley loaves and fishes. I believe in the Gospel of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. I like the story that I heard the other day of a poor man who was found

in the street one Sunday morning as he was about to commit suicide. Two of our Brethren met him, and led him to this Tabernacle, but they knew better than to bring him to hear a sermon while he was hungry. On the road they took him to a coffee shop, and gave him a cup of hot coffee and some bread and butter. And then they brought him to hear the discourse. I had a far more likely hearer in the man whose hunger was relieved than I could have had in the poor famishing sinner.

Then, after the sermon was over, they took care to find him a good dinner, and so detained him till they brought him here again in the evening and God was pleased to bless the Word to him. Rest assured that the Master's opening blind eyes, the Master's feeding the multitude, and the Master's relief of the poor were all indications to the Christian Church that clothing societies and soup kitchens, and benevolent associations, are legitimate aids to the spread of the Gospel.

Our Master's Mission had one point in it which we ought never to forget, namely, that it was carried on very largely through open-air preaching. I remember well the time when it really seemed an outrageous novelty for a man to preach in the streets. I remember proposing, twenty years ago, to my good deacons in the country that I should preach on the Sunday evening by the riverside, and the remark was made by one of them, "Ah, I do not like it, it is imitating the Methodists."

To him as a sound Calvinist it was a dreadful thing to do anything which Methodists were guilty of. To me, however, that was more a recommendation than otherwise, and I was happy to run the risk of being called Methodist.

All over England, in our cities, towns, villages, and hamlets, there are tens of thousands who never will hear the Gospel while open-air preaching is neglected. I believe that God allows us to preach in

Churches and chapels, but I do not believe that we have any Apostolic precedent for it, certainly none for confining our ministry to such places. I believe that we are allowed, if it promotes order and edification, to set apart buildings for our worship. But there is no warrant for calling these places sanctuaries and Houses of God, for all places are alike holy where holy men assemble. It is altogether a mischievous thing that we should confine our preaching within walls. Our Lord, it is true, preached in the synagogues, but He often spoke on the mountain's side, or from a boat, or in the court of a house, or in the public thoroughfares. To Him an audience was the only necessity. He was a fisher of souls of the true sort, and not of the modern order who sit in their houses and expect the fish to come to them to be caught. Did our Lord intend a minister to go on preaching from his pulpit to empty pews, when by standing on a chair or a table outside the meeting house he might be heard by hundreds? Of course, if the crowd fills the house, and it is as large as the human voice can fill, there is the less need for us to go out into the streets. But, alas, there are places of worship in London by scores, not one-fourth or even one-tenth filled, and yet the preacher goes on contentedly!

A minister is living in positive sin who constantly preaches to a mere handful within walls, while outside there are crowded courts and lanes, and alleys, where men are perishing for lack of knowledge. The minister who does his duty goes out into the highways and hedges. He goes into all the world. He preaches whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and delights to make hills and woods ring with the message of peace!

Our Lord also set an example to Home Missionaries, in the fact that He had pity on the villages. Small villages are often thought to be too insignificant for the founding of Churches in them. But the villages

help to make the large towns, and the character of the citizens of this great London of ours depends very much upon the character of the village homes from which so many of our fellow citizens are drawn. We must never neglect the smallest hamlet, but seek as far as we can, to reach even the little knots of cottages that stand by twos and threes on lone heaths and desolate moors.

At the same time, the Master also gave much attention to the towns. Capernaum and Bethsaida were not forgotten. Jerusalem frequently echoed with His voice. Where the crowds assembled at the solemn festivals, which were something like the gatherings at our markets and fairs, Christ was heard lifting up His voice, and crying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." The Home Missionary must avail himself of all gatherings of his fellow men for whatever objects they may have come together. And in every place he must proclaim the Gospel, seeking by any means to save some. This and much more may be gathered from the life of Jesus of Nazareth, "a Prophet mighty in deed and word."

II. I shall now pass on to notice, in the second place, THE MODEL HOME MISSIONARY. My Brethren, after all, the success of a work depends very little upon the system which is adopted in carrying it out--almost everything rests under God--not upon the man. There have been men who, with systems unwise and imperfect, have, nevertheless, accomplished noble results, while others with admirable organizations have done nothing, because they were not the right men. Who, then, is the fittest man to be a Missionary for Christ? Who is the woman that can best serve her God?

Behold the Model Missionary in the Person of the Lord Jesus. The man who is to serve God as a leading Missionary must be a man of teaching power and of personal influence. It is of no use to send out as a Missionary a man who cannot speak. And yet there are many places where

the people are without a minister, if speaking power is an essential qualification for that office. Why, you may frequently hear the preacher mumble so dreadfully that you can hardly follow his words. Or he is a mere reader, or else a prosy reciter of very heavy matter.

In the Established Church, the very last thing that is looked into when a young man enters "holy orders," as they call them, is whether he has gifts of utterance, or in other words, whether he is qualified by nature and by Divine Grace to be a preacher. That some very admirable and excellent persons enter the Church is cheerfully granted, but none the less we believe such a system to be essentially bad. If you want a man to spread the Gospel among his fellow men, he must be one who can preach. He must be apt to teach. He must have a way of making plain what he means, and of winning attention, so that men may be willing to listen to him.

Our Lord had this grand capacity in the highest degree. He could bring the most sublime truths down to the level of His hearers' comprehension. He knew how, with a Divine simplicity, to tell a story that would win even a child's attention. And though the Truth He spoke was such that archangels might well marvel at it, yet He put it into such a form that the little children gathered around Him, and the common people heard Him gladly. Aptness to teach--this is what we need. Pray, my Brethren, the Lord of the Harvest to send us many who have this choice gift. The pulpit, the Sunday school, and every form of Christian service need earnest workers who have the power of translating their thoughts into the language of those with whom they come in contact, so that they may be interested and impressed.

But there were higher qualifications than these. Our Lord as a Missionary was a Man who fraternized with the people. I do not think He ever passed a person on the road concerning whom He said to Himself, "I

am so much above that man that I will not speak to him." I could hardly dare to imagine Him saying such words. It would so lower the Savior to imagine such a thing. And yet, and yet, and yet--some of His ministers have thought so! How many of us, if we had seen a poor harlot coming to the well would have remained sitting by it purposely to converse with her? If we had seen her coming, knowing her character, we should probably have moved off, and have eased our conscience with the notion that hers was a case more suitable for someone else to deal with. In fact, a matter to be left to an agent of the Rescue Society.

Our Lord made no affectation of condescending or of patronizing the poor Samaritan sinner, but as naturally as possible, with every appearance of ease, He at once began to talk with her. If she had been a noble lady in the land He could not have fraternized more thoroughly with her, and yet He in no way connived at her sin. Our Lord received sinners and

ate with them. They must have seen how different He was from themselves, but He affected no distance. He pretended to no caste. He drew no lines of social demarcation. He was not a Pharisee, who stood apart in his pious eminence--pride and assumed dignity had no attractions for Him. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners in the highest and best of senses, but in other respects He was the friend of publicans and sinners.

If we are to have London blessed, it will never be by ministers who are too great to speak to the poorest of the people. Nor will your benevolent societies work much good if your lordships and ladyships cannot mingle with the humbler classes. We must be one with those whom we would bless. We must not be ashamed to call them Brethren. We must without being conscious of stooping, reach out a fraternal hand to the fallen and the degraded, that we may lift them up for Christ's sake. O

for men and women of the true brotherly and sisterly spirit--bone of the people's bone and flesh of their flesh!

Our Lord, again, was a man who could toil. He was by no means a gentleman at large, amusing His leisure with lecturing. He never preached a sermon without weaving His soul into it. He was by no means the kind of Evangelist who finds His task a light one. He could not, as some do, preach by the year without disturbing the placid current of His own emotions. No, my Brethren, never preacher worked more intensely than Jesus did--by day preaching, by night praying, oftentimes faint through weariness, and yet not finding time so much as to eat bread. Whoever did not labor, Christ did. He is the Master Worker of all the sons of men.

If we all must eat bread in the sweat of our faces, much greater was His toil when He brought the Bread of Life to us by the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and by the life-sweat of every day of His three years' ministry. His life was a scene of unrivalled labor. We can hardly conceive how thoroughly our Redeemer laid Himself out for us. Now, if the Church would see souls saved, the work will never be achieved by agents who are half asleep. Christ's kingdom will never be extended by persons who are afraid of labor. God will bless His Church by the power of the Holy Spirit, for all the power lies there--but He will have His Church travail--or the blessing will not come.

For a Home Missionary we want a man who can pray as the Master prayed. What a proficient in the art of prayer was Jesus! He was as great with God in prayer as He was with man in preaching. I heard a Brother speak the other day of our Lord's coming from the mountainside with the wild flowers on His garments, and the smell of the heather on His vesture, for He came fresh from the lone spot where He had spent the night in

prayer. Ah, my Brethren, here is the center of power! Prayer breaks hearts. These granite rocks will never yield to our hammers till we go down on our knees to smite. If we prevail with God for men, we shall prevail with men for God. The main work of the minister must be done alone. Let him do as he pleases when the multitude are listening, he shall not bring them to Christ unless he has pleaded for them when none heard him but his God. Our Home Mission needs men who can pray.

And, Brethren, if we are to secure useful men and women we must choose those who can weep. That is a fine faculty, that emotional power of the heart which makes the passions boil, and rise within like steaming vapors, till at last like the waters of dropping wells, they are condensed and fall in showers from our eyes! I do not covet that moistness of the eyes which some exhibit as the result of optical weakness or effeminacy of constitution--but manly weeping is a mighty thing. Our Lord Jesus was thoroughly a Man--far too masculine to fall into sentimentalism and affectation--but when He beheld the city, and knew all the sufferings that would come upon it from the siege as a punishment for its sin, He could not restrain the floods. His great soul ran over at His eyes.

If He had not been a man who could weep Himself, He could not, humanly speaking, have made others weep. You must feel yourselves if you would make other men feel. You cannot reach my heart till first of all your heart comes to meet mine. Lord, send into Your field men of strong emotional natures whose eyes can be fountains of tears.

To crown all, our blessed Lord was one who knew how to die! Oh, when shall we have men and women sent among us who are prepared to die in order to accomplish their lifework? I have shuddered, and all the more so because I might do no better myself, when I have heard excuses for avoiding risks of life, and reasons for escaping hardships in foreign

lands. It has been even questioned in some quarters, whether a man would be right in exposing himself to danger of life in order to preach the Gospel. I could say much, but would be sparing of censure. Only this I must say--until Divine Grace shall restore to us the ancient Apostolic self-sacrifice, we may not expect to see the Gospel conquering to any high degree.

Zeal for God's House must eat us up. Love of life must yield to love of souls. Trials must be counted as nothing for Christ's sake, and death must be defied, or we shall never capture the world for Jesus. They who wear soft raiment will

never win Ireland, or Africa, or India for Christ. The man who considers himself, and makes provision for the flesh, will do little or nothing. Christ revealed the great secret when it was said of Him, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." In proportion as a man saves himself he cannot save others. And only in proportion as he is carried away with self-sacrifice, willing to renounce luxuries, comforts, necessities, and even life, itself--only in that proportion will he succeed.

I trust that no Missionary's life may be lost, but I trust that if the Church can only bring the world to Christ by the deaths of her ministers, all our lives may be sacrificed--for what are we, my Brethren, what is any one of us--compared with the accomplishment of our Redeemer's work? Our sires went to the stake with songs upon their lips. Our ancestors were confessors who dared the barbarous cruelties of Northern hordes, and the refined persecution of Southern superstition. They were men who could die but could not refrain from witnessing for the Lord. We must quit ourselves like men for Christ. And though we may not all be called to make the extreme sacrifice, we must be ready for it. And if we shrink from it we are not the men for

such a time as this.

We want men who can toil, men who can pray, men who can weep, men who can die. In fact, we need for Christ's work men all ablaze with consecrated fervor, men under a Divine impulse, like arrows shot from the bow of the Almighty flashing straight to the target. Men like thunderbolts launched by the Eternal to go crashing through every difficulty with irresistible energy of aim. We want a Divine enthusiasm to fire us, an Almighty impetus to urge us on. Only men thus filled with the Holy Spirit shall accomplish largely the work of God.

III. My last point was to be, if Christ lived thus, and worked thus, LET US HEAR HIS CALL AND IMITATE HIM. I shall say but a few sentences, but let them be remembered. Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is your privilege to be a worker together with God. Therefore keep close to the footsteps of the great Master worker.

Remember that before He went to work He was Himself personally obedient to that Gospel which He had to preach. He did not bid others believe and be baptized, and neglect to be baptized Himself. "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," said He. And in the waves of Jordan, the Baptist immersed Him. How little will you be fitted for service if you leave any command of Christ not obeyed! How can you exhort others to do your Lord's will if you yourself are disobedient to it? The first thing, therefore, before you go to that form of service which now invites you, is to see to it that you have obeyed the Master's will, for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

This being done, let me say to you, Is there not some department of Mission work at home that you could undertake? Most probably you could not do all those things which I have mentioned as having been done by Christ. But you know that young artists will often be instructed by

their masters to sketch not the whole of a great statue by Phidias, but one single limb, an arm, a hand, or a foot. Have you not often seen in the artist's studio the foot of some great masterpiece used as a model? Just so it shall be enough to teach you service if, being unable to attempt the whole of the great scheme which I have brought before you now, you will undertake zealously to labor in one department of it. But, whatever you do, do it thoroughly, do it heartily. If it is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well. For such a Master there must be no second-rate work, and with such a gracious reward before you, there must be no offering of that which costs you nothing. You must throw yourselves into whatever you undertake for Jesus.

Will you now take one word which is often used by Mark as a motto for yourselves? The idiom of the Gospel of Mark is eutheos, "straightway." He is always saying of Christ, that straightway He did this, and straightway He did that. Now, if you have work for Christ before your eyes, straightway hasten to do it. The most of Christians miss the honor they might have in service by waiting till a more convenient season. Do something tonight before you go to bed, if it is only the giving away of a tract. Do something as each moment flies. If up to now you have not been a worker, begin now. Or if you have been a worker up till now, do not pause, but end the evening with another good word to sister, or child, or friend. Evermore breathe out consecration to Christ.

And let me bid you, dear Friends, if you love my Lord and Master, to have comfort in trying to serve Him, because there is an all-sufficient power which you may obtain for this service. Our Lord is declared in this very verse to be One who was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. That same Holy Spirit is given to the Church, and that same power lingers in the assemblies of the faithful. Ask for this

anointing, and pray that as in this verse we are told that God was with Jesus, so God may be with you. Remember last Sunday evening's text, "Fear you not. For I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Being now a pardoned sinner, ask to be an anointed saint. As one who is reconciled to God, ask that you may be strengthened by God, so that from this day forward you may serve your Master mightily. I do not know that I ever felt happier in my life than I did last Tuesday night when I was listening to my dear Friend, Mr. Orsman, the pastor of the poor but gracious Church in Golden Lane, in the City. He is a good Brother, who, some years ago, was converted to God under our ministry, and he was there and then converted all over. Some of you, when you believe in Christ appear to have only a sprinkling conversion, but I love those men and women who get an immersion conversion.

They, go down into the deeps of the love of Christ, and give themselves altogether up to their Lord. Why, that dear man, though working all day long in the Post Office, yet finds in the evening opportunity to preach Christ. And if you were to go to Golden Lane, you would find there all the forms of organization which I have described at the commencement of this sermon in active exercise. Among the poorest, lowest and most degraded of the people, Divine Grace has found out precious jewels. Some seven or eight who are now ministers of the Gospel, first began to preach to his poor people there. He has now spiritual children scattered all over the world by emigration, and the good man, having consecrated himself fully to his work, is most happy in it.

I believe from the bottom of my soul that these single-handed men, who give themselves up to a special district and work it well, are the very greatest blessings that London can have. And if there is a young man

here endowed with abilities, and perhaps with a little money and time, what better could I propose to him, as a lover of Christ, than to begin some such work for his Master? The same applies to Christian women. Oh, what good Christian women can do! There are those in this place whose names, if I were to mention them, would be had in honor by us all for what they have accomplished!

Without obtruding themselves as preachers into public assemblies, they are working away for Christ privately, and bringing many into the Church of God. O Christian men and women, time is flying, men are dying, Hell is filling, Christ is waiting to see of the travail of His soul. I beseech you by the heart of God's mercy, by the heart of Christ, by His love for souls--bestir yourselves and proclaim salvation. May the Lord's blessing be with you. Amen.

Chapter 22

Away With Fear

(No. 930)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 10, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Fear you not. For I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Isaiah 41:10.

IF there should be nothing in the sermon this evening, Brethren, there is enough in the text to satisfy your mouth with good things, so that your youth may be renewed like the eagle's. May the Holy Spirit spread for you a table in the wilderness. And may He give you appetites to feed by faith upon these royal dainties, which, like the food that Daniel and his companions fed upon, shall make you well-favored before God and man.

To whom are these words spoken? For we must not steal from God's Scripture any more than from man's treasury. We have no more right to take a promise to ourselves that does not belong to us than we have to take another man's purse from him. These words were evidently spoken in God's name by the Prophet to God's "chosen" ones. Read the eighth verse "But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend."

And again in the ninth verse--"You are My servant. I have chosen you." So, then, if you or I should meet with anything that is gracious and comfortable here it will come to us, not upon the footing of merit, but upon the ground of Sovereign Grace. It will not be ours because we have chosen Christ, but because He has chosen us. Our heavenly Father has

blessed us with all spiritual blessings according as He has chosen us in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world. The eternal choice is the wellhead from which all the springs of mercy flow. Happy are you, my Soul, if Divine Grace has inscribed your name in God's eternal book! You may come to this text like a child to his father's own table, and you may draw from it all manner of comforts to sustain your spirit.

But since, dear Friends, you and I cannot read the secret roll of God's electing love, we are helped to judge whether this text belongs to us by another description. For those who are here called "chosen," are, in the ninth verse, also described as being "called." "You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from the chief men thereof." God's chosen people of old were set apart for Himself, and called out from all the rest of the world, and so they are now. They are a people called out by His special Grace--with a gracious call which they have not been able to resist--and they have come forth and declared themselves on the Lord's side.

"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many Brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called." If you are called, depend upon it you are chosen. I do not mean if you are called in the common sense with the universal call of the Gospel, for in that sense, "many are called, but few are chosen." But I mean if you are effectually called, personally called, called of the Holy Spirit, called as Mary was when Jesus said to her, "Mary"--and that gracious voice thrilled through her soul, and she responded to it, and said to Him--"Master!"

Have you been so called that you have forsaken all for Christ, or are willing to do so? Have you left your old pleasures and your old

companions? And are you now a separated one, set apart for Christ? Oh, if it is so, let nothing keep you back from enjoying the riches of my text, for every comfortable sentence in it belongs to you!

Still, farther to help us to find out to whom this text belongs, notice that the person here described is spoken of in the eighth verse as a "servant." "You, Israel, are My servant," and in the ninth verse, "And said unto you, You are My servant." Now, are you God's servant, dear Hearer? A servant does not do his own will. He would soon get his discharge if he carried out his own whims and wishes. He takes his guidance from his master's mouth and his master's eyes. Have you submitted your will to God's will? Are you no longer governed by a proud and high spirit which cries, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him?" Do you desire to know what God's will is, and then to do just what He bids you? Do you count it your highest honor to be called a servant of Christ? Is it for Him that you live? Is His glory your highest aim? If

so, then you who are willing to labor may come and feast upon the text, for every honey-dropping word of it belongs to you, since you serve the Lord Christ.

One more word to help you to see whether you have a right to these promises. He says in the ninth verse, "I have chosen you, and not cast you away." Now you have, some of you, been professors of the Christian faith for many years. Some of the younger ones of us have now been twenty years maintained in His House, for it is just so long since we were baptized in Christ's name. Surely, my Brethren, we feel that, judged by the strictness of the Law, we deserved to have been cast away! And yet, being under Grace, we have been preserved by the Lord's salvation even until now.

Still though faint, we are pursuing. We are bound to confess, "My feet

had almost gone. My steps had well-near slipped." But we have been upheld even to this hour. Oh, then, we have much to be grateful for, and much to rejoice in, for perseverance is a great pledge and earnest of final salvation. "To him that overcomes, the crown of life shall be." And to us, as having overcome up till now, the promises of the text belong. He who has kept you, my Brothers and Sisters, till this hour, bids you now come and look into this choice cabinet and take out the jewels and wear them. For they are all your own to deck you, that you may adorn His doctrine the more. In a word, the text belongs to God's chosen. Those who are His by being separated from the world--who are distinguished by their practical service of God--and who continue in that service. And by God's Grace will continue in it even till the end.

Come we now to the text. I will read it again, "Fear you not. For I am with You; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." There is here, first, a very natural disease--fear. There is here, secondly, a command against fear--"Fear you not." And there is, thirdly, God's promise to help us to overcome it. And that promise is given in three or four ways so that we may chase fear away with a whip of many thongs.

I. First, then, we are reminded OF A VERY COMMON DISEASE OF GOOD MEN--FEAR AND DISMAY. This disease of fear came into man's heart with sin. Adam never was afraid of his God till he had broken His commands. When the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of day, and Adam heard the Almighty's footsteps, he hastened to commune with God as a dear child talks with a loving father.

But the moment he had touched the fruit that was forbidden, he ran away and hid himself. And when God said, "Where are you, Adam?" Adam came

cringing and trembling, for he was afraid of God. It is sin, consciousness of sin, that "makes cowards of us all." Though He who made us is a consuming fire, and we should always have a holy awe of Him, yet the fear that causes bondage would never have come into our spirit if we had not first of all transgressed His Law. Sin is the mother of the fear which has torment.

And, Brethren, fear continues in good men because sin continues in them. If they had attained to perfect love it would cast out fear, for fear has torment. But, since the flesh is still in them and the lusts still strive for the mastery, even the holiest of God's people are sometimes afflicted with the mockings of the child of the bondwoman. O that he were cast out, for he can never be heir with the freeborn nature! As Divine Grace grows and increases in power, fear declines. And when sin is cut up by the root and branch, then no doubt or fear will ever vex us again. Once strip us of these houses of clay. Once deliver us from all indwelling sin--and our spirits shall seek God as the sparks seek the sun.

But until then, since by reason of weakness sin sometimes prevails, fear also prevails, and we are sadly cast down. Fear, coming in by sin and being sustained by sin, readily finds food upon which it may live. Let the Believer look within, and, my Brethren, he has only to do that for a moment to see abundant reasons for fear. "Ah!" says Fear as it looks within at the heart still prone to wander, "I shall never hold on my way." "Ah!" says Fear as it looks at the besetting sin, "I shall be tripped up yet. I shall never persevere to the end."

Grace is there, it is true, but Fear is blind to the better nature and fixes his glance only on the body of this death. Looking within upon the old nature is seldom a very pleasant operation, especially if we forget that it is crucified with Christ. I suppose if any man among us

could see his own heart as it really is, he would be driven mad. But Faith looks at all the ruins of the Fall and she believes that the blood of Christ will get the victory. She sings her poem of triumph even while the fight is raging, rejoicing with the Apostle, that, "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound: that as sin has reigned unto death, even so might Grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

But Fear says, "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy. Such a poor frail boat as mine will never stem the flood and weather the tempest, but I shall make shipwreck after all." And then, my Brethren, if Fear finds food within, it also very readily finds food without. Sometimes it is poverty, sometimes sickness, sometimes the recollection of the past, and quite as often dread of the future. Even those who have faith in God may occasionally be weak enough to fear and be dismayed about common circumstances to which they ought to be indifferent, or over which they ought by faith to exult.

Desponding people can find reason for fear where there is no fear. A certain class of persons are greatly gifted with the mournful faculty of inventing troubles. If the Lord has not sent them any trial, they make one for themselves. They have a little trouble-factory in their houses, and they sit down and use their imaginations to meditate terror. They weave sackcloth and scrape up ashes. They know that they shall be bankrupt--there was a little falling off in their trade last week. They believe that they shall soon be too old for labor--it is true they are older than they were a month ago. They feel sure that they shall die in the workhouse--it is clear they will die somewhere. They feel certain about this dreadful thing and that, and fret accordingly. None of these things have happened to them yet, and in the

judgment of others they are less likely to happen now than ever they were. But yet they convert their suspicions into realities and torture themselves with them though they are but fancies. Oh, it is sad that we should degrade ourselves to this--

"Shall the thin cloudlets of this transient life
Shut out the light of Lo ve Immutable?
Shall unsubstantial mists of earthborn care
Conceal from saints the everlasting hills,
From which their speedy succor shall descend?
Oh, shame, and sin most base, that heirs of Heaven,
Enriched with all the fullness of the Lord,
Should fret, and fume, and wear away their souls
With childish dreams of ills which never may come;
Or coming, shall be laden deep with good!" In certain instances the habit of fearing has reached a monstrous growth. Indeed, I know some of my acquaintances who think it the right thing to be always fearing, and are half suspicious of a man who has strong faith. They even call full assurance, "presumption," and are amazed that anybody should have confidence in God. But if they did but know it, there is more presumption in unbelief than there can be in faith. It is gross presumption on a child's part to disbelieve its father's word. There is no presumption in a child's believing what its father tells it. It, then, only does its duty. For me to accept the naked promises of a faithful God, and, despite my unworthiness, still to believe them true, is humility.

But for me to take that promise from my Father's lips, and begin to cavil at it, and to question it, is nothing better than pride hiding its nakedness with the thinnest gauze of pretended modesty. Shun, I pray you, the unbelief that apes humility, and seek after that

unstaggering faith which is the true meekness in the sight of God!

Yet, I would not blame all those who are much given to fear, for in some it is rather their disease than their sin, and more their misfortune than their fault. Mr. Feeble-Mind will never make a Great-Heart even if you feed him on the finest of the wheat. Mr. Ready-to-Halt will never stand so firmly, or run so nimbly, as Mr. Valiant-for-Truth--do what you will with him. There are some in God's family who are constitutionally weak, and will probably never outgrow that weakness till they have entered into rest. I would do anything I could to encourage the fearing ones to rise above their weakness. I would even give just enough of the tonic of censure to make them feel that it is not right to be unbelieving, but I would not like to censure their despondency so severely as to make them think that they are not the people of God.

I tell you, Sirs, I would sooner you would go to Heaven creeping on all fours, with never a song in your mouths, than go to Hell presuming. It is better to be a broken-legged lamb in Christ's bosom than to be the strongest ram in Satan's flock. God deliver us from being strong and mighty in ourselves. But yet at the same time there are many evils connected with fearing, and every child of God should be on his guard against giving way to it. In every case much may be accomplished by arousing ourselves to cry to the strong One for strength to overcome our unbelief. Gloom need not be perpetual with us.

I know it is said that some of God's plants grow best in the shade. I believe they do, but I should like to try them in the sunlight a little and see if they would not grow better there than their best has up to now been. There are precious flowers of Grace which are constantly watered with the tears of sorrow, but methinks the dews of consolation would an-

swer their purpose just as well. May the Lord visit such, and bring them up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. May they be of good courage, for the Lord says to them--

"Fear not. Be not dismayed."

Be it also remarked before we leave this point, that even the strongest of God's servants are sometimes the subjects of fear. David was a very strong man, and he overthrew Goliath. But we read that on one occasion when he was in battle, "David waxed faint." So the Lord's mightiest heroes sometimes have their fainting fits. We used to talk of our "Iron Duke," and there was one man in Scripture who was an Iron Prophet, and that was Elijah the Tishbite, and yet he sat down under the juniper tree, and, I had almost said, whined, "It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life. For I am not better than my fathers."

The best of men are but men at the best, and the strongest men are weak if God's mighty hand is for awhile withdrawn. Some of my dear friends will occasionally tell me, "We have suffered from doubts, and fears, and troubles, of which you have no conception." They suppose that their minister, and others whom they love and respect, know nothing at all experimentally about their infirmities. I wish it were so. We have something better to talk of than our own follies. We do not feel bound to turn the pulpit into a public confessional, and all experiences are not to be published abroad. But, for all that, permit me to say that there are times with the boldest and the strongest when they would give all they have for the very smallest evidence of Divine Grace. They would count themselves happy to creep to the foot of the Cross and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Yet, I do not say this to encourage anybody in fearing, for, let me just give you the opposite side. There is no reason why, if we lived nearer to God and walked more carefully, we might not, as a rule, live

above all this fear and dismay. I once met with a dear Brother in Christ, who is now in Glory, about whose truthfulness I never could have a doubt. He told me that by the space of thirty years he had not felt a doubt of his interest in Jesus Christ. At the time I heard him say it, I thought it was quite an unusual circumstance, but I bless God that I have now met with several, "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all My delight."

Their testimony is the same--that though they may have been shaken, they have never been moved from their steadfast hold on Christ. Though they may have had a few moments of trembling--yet they have never been so dismayed as to question their part in Jesus. They have stood fast, and they have sung year after year, "O God, my heart is fixed. my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise." I hold that out as an object of ambition to every Believer in Christ. Do try and see if you cannot rinse your mouth out of all that bitter stuff which makes you sing so often and so dolefully--

"It is a point Ilong to know__."

That is a very suitable song for Christian infants, a hymn often sung by enquirers. But O that you would get beyond such juvenile ditties, and learn to sing fitter music, such as this--

"NowIhave found the ground, wherein Sure my soul's anchor may remain--
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin Before the world's foundation slain.
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay, When Hea ven and earth are fled away.
Love! You bottomless abyss! My sins are swallowed up in You; Covered is my unrighteousness, Nor spot of guilt remains on me
While Jesus' blood through earth and skies, Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries!
With faith I plunge me in this sea-- Here is my hope, my joy, my rest!
Hither, when Hell assails, I flee,

1 look into my Sa vior's breast; Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear!
Mercy is all that's written there."

II. We shall now occupy a little while in considering GOD'S COMMAND AGAINST FEAR. "Fear you not. Be not dismayed." That precept is absolute and unqualified--we are not to fear at all. He does not say, "Fear so much, but not beyond that," but He gives an unlimited exhortation, "Fear not." He does not say, "Do not fear so often," but, "Fear not." It is an exhortation without any time to it, and therefore it applies to all times. "Fear not." Fear not at all. "Be not dismayed." He does not say, "Be not utterly dismayed." There is no qualifying adverb, but it means, "Be not dismayed at all." This command, then, chides fear and forbids dismay.

Why should not the child of God be afraid? There are several reasons which justify the Divine command. Let us meditate upon some of them. First, my Brethren, we may not fear because it is sinful. It is usually sinful to be afraid and dismayed, because such a state of mind almost always results from unbelief. Have you ever thought what a great sin unbelief is? No, we talk about it, and confess it, but we do not sufficiently consider the deep heinousness of it. We will confess unbelief of God without a blush, and yet nothing could make us acknowledge dishonesty to man. I pray you, my Brethren, tell me which of these two is the worst fault? Is not unbelief a robbery of God, a treason felony against Him?

If I were in conversation with any one of you, and you should say to me, "Sir, I do not believe you," nothing you could say would sting me more. It is a very strong thing to say to any man, "I do not believe you." Why, if there were two of the lowest men or women fighting in a street quarrel, and one of them said to the other, "I do not believe a word you say," the sorriest drab would feel the insult. Every truthful

man feels that he has a right to be believed. He speaks upon the honor of an honest man, and if you say, "I do not believe you," and even begin to lament that you have no faith in him, the reflection is not upon yourself, but on the person whom you cannot believe.

And shall it ever come to this, that God's own children shall say that they do not believe their God? Oh, sin of sins! It takes away the very Godhead from God, for if God is not true, He is not God. And if He is not fit to be believed, neither is He fit to be adored--for a God whom you cannot trust you cannot worship. Oh, deicidal Traitor, you sin of unbelief! Oh, God-killing sin! May we be delivered from it, and not think it light or trifling, but shake it off from us as Paul shook off the viper into the fire.

Doubts and fears also breed sin. It was said of Jeroboam that he sinned, and made Israel to sin--and so does unbelief. It carries a thousand other sins in its loins. The man who believes in God will fight with temptation, but the man who does not believe in Him is ready to fall into any snare. See yonder tradesman--he is just now in low water through the badness of business. He is a Believer in God, and he says, "I believe that God will carry me through it if I keep to the straight line of integrity. I trust in God, and come what may, I will not pawn my reputation." Now, whatever may come of it, that man's character will be safe, because his faith is firm.

But here is another man. He says, "Well, I am in a very awkward predicament, and I must look to the main chance. I am not sure that God will be with me. I must help myself, for I am very likely to be ruined." That man will take up with one of those dodges in business by which men raise money. I need not tell you what those dodges are, because I dare say a great many of you know them, either by using them yourselves, or by having them used upon you. They are part and parcel

of the art of stealing other people's money--without being locked up as a thief.

Well, he avails himself of one of those schemes--of course he does--he who has not faith is sure to have much craft. He who cannot trust God soon begins to trust the devil, and he that begins to trust the devil soon finds himself in the mire. Faith it is that holds a man as the great bower anchor holds a vessel when the winds are out. Believing that God will not fail you enables you to defy temptation. Now see how the man who has faith beats the devil! There the devil stands. He says, "If you will serve me I will give you_." "Well, what will you give me?" "I will give you the whole world." "But I have that already, for this world is mine, given to me in Christ, and as much of it as is good for me I shall always have." "Well, but I will make you great." "I do not want to be great, my joy is to make Christ great, and my greatness is in Him." "But I will give you silver." "Oh, then!" says the Christian, "put it down." No sooner is the heap spread out than the Believer covers it all over with ten times its weight in gold, and so laughs the fiend to scorn. I mean that for every blessing that sin could bring, Divine Grace brings ten times as much of a greater blessing--and so faith checkmates Satan--and temptation is put away. Unbelief has no such power, but readily falls into the lion's jaws. Therefore, fear not, lest you in the hour of trial be overcome with temptation and hurried into sin.

Fear not, again, because it injures yourself. Nothing can weaken you so much, nothing can make you so unhappy as to be distrusting. Nor is this a small thing, for Christian joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and he who causes it to wither robs the Lord of glory. Is it not written, "Rejoice evermore"? Fear weakens the Believer's influence, and so causes mischief to others. Converts are not brought to Christ through

unbelieving Christians. It is faith that wins souls. Let me give you an example of it. There is a good woman over there who has lost her child, her only child. Now when her husband saw that dear child die, he was exceedingly mad against God, and said many a hard and bitter thing, but his wife did not. She loved the child with as tender a love as the father did, but she laid it down on the bed, and she said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Good woman, your husband did not say anything, but he felt the difference between himself and you, and who can tell what good results will follow?

Now, if a professed Christian under trial acts just like a worldling, the worldly man sums it all up and says, "There is nothing in religion." But, if in the time of difficulty, the time of affliction, the time of bereavement, the Christian man's faith makes him happy, resigned, content with the Lord's will--why, then, even the coarsest of ungodly minds see the power of Divine Grace! And it may be that they will be led to reflect, and to ask themselves, "If there is such a choice Grace as this in the world, why should I not have it?" And perhaps they will come to seek and find it. Oh, for your own sake, for your neighbor's sake, for the Church's sake, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake, for God's sake--fear not-- neither be dismayed!

III. Time fails me to dwell on this, and so now I must come to the very heart and soul of the text--THE PROMISES WHICH GOD GIVES TO PREVENT FEAR AND DISMAY. Five times in this verse you get some form of the pronoun "you," and five times you get the pronoun "I." Whatever there may be of you, there shall be as much of God. Whatever there may be of your weakness, there shall be as much of God's strength. Whatever there may be of your sin, there shall be as much of God's mercy to meet it all. May the Holy Spirit reveal all the fullness of this wonderful

verse to your hearts!

"Fear you not. For I am with you." Many a man fears because he is afraid of loneliness. More or less we must be alone in the service of God. Christian companionship is a great comfort, but if a man becomes a leader in Israel, he becomes a lonely spirit to a certain degree. So, too, in suffering, there is a bitterness with which no stranger can intermeddle. A part of the road to Heaven every man must tread with no companion but his God. Now, I know some of you are getting old, and your friends have died one by one, and you are saving, "I shall be left quite alone."

Others of you have come up to London from some country village where you used to have many Christian friends. And there is no place so desolate as this horrid London. When a man dwells in its teeming streets, and meets not a friend among its millions of passers to and fro, I know well what your state of mind is. Or perhaps you are going to the States, or Canada, or Australia, and the thought in your mind now is--"I cannot bear being separated from all I love." Now, here is this precious word for you, "Fear you not. For I am with you."

The Lord of Hosts is the best of company. His society is the angels' delight, and the bliss of glorified spirits. Be thankful, Believer, that you are not alone. The Father is with you, the Son is with you, the Holy Spirit is with you, and what does that mean? It means that Omnipotence will be with you to be your strength! Omniscience will be with you to be your wisdom! Immutability will be with you to be your succor--all the attributes of God will be with you to be your treasury. "Fear you not. For I am with you."

Another fear comes over men, and that is that they may lose all they have in the world. And they know very well that if they lose their property they usually lose their friends. Like the swallows which come

to us in the springtime--and are gone when the summer has departed--such are our worldly friends. When our goods are gone they are gone. But here the second promise comes in, "Be not dismayed, for I am your God." Jonah's gourd was withered, but Jonah's God was not. Your goods may go, but your God will not. Those around you may rob you of your loose cash of present comfort, but your invested capital, your God, they cannot take from you.

That was a sweet word of the child when he saw his mother month after month in her widow's weeds sitting down and weeping, because her husband was dead. "Mother," said he, "is God dead?" Ah, if our God were dead we should be poor orphans, indeed! But while it rings out from the precious Book, and rings in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, "Be not dismayed. For I am your God," we have not come to absolute poverty yet.

"Look," said the ambassador of France to the Spanish ambassador as he took him into the French king's treasury, "Look at my master's gold! How rich he is!"

The Spanish ambassador took his walking stick and began to thrust it down into the bags and into the money chest. "What do you do that for?" said the Frenchman. "I want to see if there is a bottom to it," said he. "Oh," said the French ambassador, "of course there is a bottom." "Ah!" said the Spaniard, "but my master's treasury has no bottom, for he has all the mines of Mexico and Peru." Now, what the Spaniard said boastfully we may say truthfully. The treasury of our God is without a bottom, it is fathomless. And while you can hear God say to you, "I am your God," you may laugh at penury and distress, at destruction and famine. For you shall lack no good thing. You shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and your mouth shall praise Him with joyful lips.

Another fear that every good man has at times, unless he is buoyed up

by faith, arises from a sense of personal weakness. "I have a battle to fight, and I am very weak. I have a work to do for God before I die, and I have not sufficient power to perform it." Now, here comes the next word of the text, "I will strengthen you." The strength which I have to do my work with does not lie in me. If it did it would be all over with me. How little strength there is in this arm I sorrowfully know. But there is no man on earth who can tell me how much strength God might put, if He so willed, into that same arm! If He willed it, He could enable me, a poor, weak, trembling man, to pull down Gaza's gates as Samson did of old!

He can put physical strength of the most gigantic kind into an infant's arm if He wills it. But, my Brethren, transfer the figure to spiritual strength. You have God's command to preach. Ah, it would be but poor preaching if you were let alone to do the preaching. But no tongue can tell how God can make you preach if He pleases to help you. You have to take a large class of boys and girls, or of young men and young women, and you feel you cannot do it. Of course, without His help you cannot, but go and try! For He has said, "I will strengthen you."

There was a bush in the wilderness, and it was nothing to look at, nothing but a bush. But oh, how it glowed with splendor when God came into it so that it burned with fire, and yet was not consumed! God can come into you, my Brother, and into you, my Sister, and can make you blaze with glory like the bush in Horeb. He can make you so strong that you can endure anything. Why, He has done it up till now. If somebody had told you years ago that you would have passed through your last trouble, you would have said, "I shall never be able to bear it." But you have borne it. "Ah," your unbelief would have said, "that will be the death of me." But it has not been the death of you. You can at this very moment tell of the widow's God. You can sing of Him who

strengthens the weak against the strong, who delivers them that are ready to perish, and makes the faint heart to sing for joy!

Here is a word, then, for timid, trembling workers for God. "I will strengthen you." Then comes the next consoling promise, "Yes, I will help you." This is intended to meet the fear that friendly succor will fail. There are some who say, "I believe that God can strengthen me personally, but I need to have those around me who will help me. I desire to see raised up in the Church of God other ministers, other Christian workers. I want to have some at my side who will, with equal earnestness, and with greater talent, contend for the Truth."

Note, then, this word, "I will help you." I will not only give you strength to use yourselves, but I will exert My strength both in other men and in My Providence to help you. Well, you know what a grand matter is God's help. I told you once before a story I heard from a minister, but I must tell it again. He said be was one day bringing his books up stairs into another room, for he was going to have his study on the first floor instead of downstairs, and his little boy wanted to help Father carry some of the books. "Now," said the father, "I knew he could not do it, but as he wanted to be doing something, to please him and to do him good by encouraging his industry, I told him he might take a book and carry it up."

So away he went, and picked out one of the biggest volumes--Caryl on Job or Poli Synopsis I should think--and when he had climbed a step or two up the stairs, down he sat and began to cry. He could not manage to carry his big book any further. He was disappointed and unhappy. How did the matter end? Why, the father had to go to the rescue, and carry both the great book, and the little man. So, when the Lord gives us a work to do, we are glad to do it. But our strength is not equal to the work, and then we sit down and cry--and it comes to this--that our

blessed Father carries the work--and carries the little man, too! And then it is all done, and done gloriously. It is a simple illustration, but may it comfort some desponding heart.

"Yes, I will help you."

The last word of the text is, "Yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Many a child of God is afflicted with a fear that he shall one day bring dishonor upon the Cross of Christ, and in an unguarded moment shall slip with his feet. This is a very natural fear, and in some respects a very proper fear--

"Ah, Lord, with such a heart as mine,
Unless You hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And perish at the last."

It only wants, we think, the temptation to take us in the weak point, and then it will be all over with us. But now again I beg you to grasp this precious Word, "I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." That is the same hand which holds the stars in their place. That is the hand which bears up the unpillared arch of Heaven, that spans both sea and shore. Can it not bear you up?

rest upon it, and you shall not be cast down! The right hand of His righteousness is the very hand that you and I once had cause to fear, lest our offended King should smite us with it, for we righteously deserved His wrath. But ever since the hand of Christ was pierced, the right hand of God has never smitten a Believer so as to destroy him. That same hand which might have crushed, is now placed under us to bear us up in all our afflictions.

1 wish I could have clipped the wings of time for this last half-hour, that we might have tarried longer in these rich pastures. But dear Friends, I give you the words of the text to take away with you. Here

you have wafers made with honey, such as Israel fed on in the wilderness. Here you have angels' food--no, the very Bread of Life itself lies within these choice words. The only fear I have is lest you should miss them through unbelief. "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Do not merely "see" that He is good as you read the text, but "taste" the text. Let it lie on the palate of your soul. Absorb it into your very nature.

Try to know that it is true, and true to you, though you are the very least of God's people in your own estimation, and the most unworthy sinner this side of Hell. "Fear you not. For I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Go home, and take the text with you in the hand of faith. It shall prove to you like the widow's barrel of meal and cruse of oil. It shall not fail you till the day when the Lord shall bring you out of this land of famine to eat bread in His kingdom with His dear Son.

My heart mourns to think that this text does not belong to some of you, because you do not belong to Christ. O my dear Friend, how I desire that you may yet have the promises of the Covenant for your own! If you believe with all your heart, you may. Trust Jesus Christ, and the promises are yours. I tried to preach my Master's sacrifice for sin this morning. I have now set before you one of the sweet fruits that grow from the bitter tree upon which He hung. O come to the tree of the Cross, and look up to His sufferings, and rely upon Him! And then, when you have sat under His shadow with great delight, may this text, which is one of the fruits of that tree, be sweet unto your taste. The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 23

Three Precious Things

(No. 931)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 8, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He is precious." 1 Peter 2:7.

"Precious promises." 2Peter 1:4.

"Precious faith." 2Peter 1:1.

THESE three precious things, when put together, present to us a treasure of priceless things, altogether without parallel. When Moses was about to die he pronounced a blessing upon all the tribes, but the benediction which he allotted to the tribe of Joseph was remarkable for containing in it an extraordinary collection of precious things.

In the thirteenth verse of the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, we read, "And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of Heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush."

That blessing, large as it is, would, were it not for its last term, fall far short of the three texts which we are about to consider. The blessings here called by Moses "precious," were, after all, but temporal mercies. The dews exhale--even the deep that lies under will one day be dried up. The precious fruits brought forth by the sun will wither. The precious fruit ripened by the moon will rot. There are no

chief metals in the ancient mountains, whether they are silver or gold, that are eternal, or that can make a spiritual being rich. There are no precious things of the lasting hills, though they are copper and iron. And these things are precious in the arts and sciences and employments of men, but will perish in the using. As for the precious things of the earth, are they not earthy? And the fullness thereof, is it not vanity? Were it not that the blessing of the great Lawgiver closed with "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush," it would not have contained a word large enough to satisfy an immortal spirit, or give bliss to the heart of man.

Before you, however, my Brethren, I spread a far choicer store of precious things than Moses strung together in the golden chain of his benediction. We have here three precious things which will outlast sun and moon. Precious things which are all heavenly, spiritual, soul-filling, and satisfactory. Precious things which, if a man has them, they shall make him rich and bring him no sorrow. Precious things that shall adorn and enrich their owners when all the peculiar treasure of kings shall be dissolved by the last fire.

The three precious things of my text bear a certain relation to one another, which will aid your memories. "He is precious," that is, Jesus Christ is precious--here is the priceless gem. "Exceeding great and precious promises"--here is the worthy case which holds the gem. "Like precious faith," as Paul calls it, "like precious faith" with the Apostles-- here is the blessed hand by which we grasp the case and the gem, too. Mark well, I pray you, the precious pearl, the precious case to hold it, and the precious title-deed that secures it to us, or as I said before, the precious hand which enables us to grasp the unrivalled jewel, and to call it all our own.

I. To begin then with THE PRICELESS GEM, the first, the highest of all

precious things. Jesus Christ our Lord is in Himself to Believers most precious. O that I had power to speak of His preciousness as it ought to be spoken of! He is worthy of an angelic speaker to tell out all His worth. He is, first of all, essentially precious. He possesses an intrinsic worth. We worship Him as God. We believe Him to be "very God of very God," and though most assuredly Man, and in this respect, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, He is our Brother born for adversities, yet is He co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

And therefore we can never too reverentially speak of Him, nor set too high a value upon Him. He must be precious who is infinite God. Being, however, God and Man, He becomes remarkably precious to us in His complex Nature. His Manhood was without taint of sin. He came into this world with no corruption. He lived in this world with no transgression. His was immaculate Manhood. What a wonder that God should be willing to veil Himself in human flesh!

What a miracle of miracles that the Infinite should deign to take upon Himself the form of a servant, and be found in fashion as a Man! Viewing our Lord Jesus as God, we should have adored Him at a distance--as perfect Man we should have reverenced His Character--but when we see Him as God and Man together, we mark that He is the connecting link between our groveling condition and the loftiness of the Most High. And we prize beyond measure the Incarnate God. When we see how by God's coming down to man, man goes up to God, Immanuel, God with us becomes our peace, and brings us near to God, though before we were afar off.

Brethren, if we consider our Lord in the Character which is peculiar to Himself, and which He prizes most, and to which, indeed, He owes the name Jesus Christ, we shall see Him as the anointed Savior. To every

sinner who feels his sin, Christ is precious. To every child of God who is saved, the Savior must forever be fairest among the fair. To every heir of Heaven who has experienced the sweetness of His saving Grace, Christ must appear to be "the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." A world destroyed I see if it had not been for a Savior born. A world forever cast into Hell I see if it had not been for a Savior dying on the Cross. As a Savior, O earth, you as yet know not His preciousness. As a Savior, O Heaven, you cannot reach the full merit of His praise. He is precious, then, if you think of Him as He is, as God and Man, and as a Savior, in which office the two Natures are combined in one.

Brethren, Christ is so precious that He cannot be bought. If a man should give all the substance of his house to purchase an interest in Christ, it would be utterly condemned. Rich men might gather together all their goodly things, yes, India might be exhausted of its wealth, Peru drained of its silver, and California of its gold--but no part nor lot in Christ could be bought--even with sapphires and diamonds. He gives Himself away right freely, according to the riches of His Grace! But He cannot be purchased, for He is so precious that He cannot even be priced.

A whole world can never weigh against Him any more than a single grain of dust would weigh against the universe. There is no measuring line with which to form a unit for calculation, with which to measure Him. He is infinite, and finite judgments will never be able to comprehend His unutterable value. He is God's unspeakable gift. Heaven itself is nothing as compared with Him, and if a man had to wade breast-deep through a thousand Hells to come to Christ, it were well worth the venture, if at the last he might but say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

Jesus is so precious that He cannot be matched. There is none like He is. The fairest of the fair are uncomely and deformed when compared with Him. As Rutherford would say, "Black sun, black moon, black stars, but, O bright, infinitely bright Lord Jesus." "He is the express image of His Father's Person, and the brightness of His Father's Glory." You shall find none that can be likened unto Him if you ransack time and space. Miss Him as your Savior, and you have lost the only salvation possible. Gain Him, and you will want no other, for He is made of God unto you "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption," and all your souls can want.

Yes, He Himself is all. If Heaven and earth were sold, you could not match Christ in any market if you gave the price of Heaven and earth for His like. If you search eternity, and ransack immensity, there shall never be found one fit to be second to Him, He is so precious. Precious, Brethren, He is to us, because He cannot be lost. All the precious things in this world can be lost. Our jewels may be stolen, our house may be broken into by a thief, and the safe may be taken away. But Christ is such a jewel that even Satan himself can never rob the soul of him when once it has Him.

My heart evermore rejoices in that precious Truth of God. Let Jesus Christ be once mine as the gift of God--I am safe, for--"the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Lord never repents of what He has done. He never plays fast and loose, or takes back a benefit which He has once bestowed. Is not Jesus a priceless, precious jewel, since He cannot be lost?!

And what is equally as delightful to remember, He cannot be destroyed. Even the diamond can be dissolved, bring but sufficient heat to bear upon it. Focus upon it the full rays of the sun, and the sparkling crystal dissolves into a little gas. But though men have tried to focus

all the heat of persecution upon the Christian, they have never been able to separate him from the love of Christ. And though earth and Hell have stirred up their malice, and the furnace has been heated seven times hotter. Though the child of God has been tossed into it, and apparently deserted to the fury of his enemies-- yet never in a single case has the precious gem of Christ Jesus in the heart been destroyed--nor the Believer's interest in it.

Jesus and His servants have lived together, according to the glorious promise, "Because I live, you shall live also." See the preciousness, then, of Christ, the intrinsic preciousness, the essential preciousness of Christ, because He cannot be bought, He cannot be priced, He cannot be matched, He cannot be lost, He cannot be destroyed. Happy and rich beyond expression are they who can truly say, "Unto us Christ is precious."

This, however, does but touch a very small corner of the field, for our Lord is precious from the service which He renders to us. Who shall tell all the benefit which Jesus confers on a Believer? As we cannot comprehend so wide a subject in a single discourse, I will give you but a bare outline. There are four precious things which Jesus is to a Believer--life, light, love, liberty. I will defy all mankind to find four more precious things than these--but they are all in Christ.

First, life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "As the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will." What a precious thing is life! The poor mariner's wife rushes down to the beach in the storm, and see, the waves at last have washed up her lost beloved, the father of the babe which is hanging at her breast. He is dead. The ungenerous sea has made a wife a widow. Oh, what would she not give, if she had it, to restore

life once more to that well-beloved form!

But life is a benefit her prayers and tears cannot obtain. Herein is Jesus glorified, for He gives life to those who are spiritually dead, and if any of you are weeping today over an unconverted husband, a child who is dead in trespasses and sins, a sister or a brother unsaved, Jesus can come to you and give life to your dear ones in answer to your prayers. He is Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Moreover, He is the sole nutriment of all spiritual life.

Yonder shipwrecked man has constructed a raft, and far out on the wild expanse of pitiless waters he has floated wearily day after day sighing for a friendly sail or for sight of land. What would he not give for a little water, for water has become the essential of his life. His tongue is like a firebrand, and his mouth is as an oven. He himself all dried and parched, sighs and cries to Heaven, hoping that perhaps a merciful shower may drop refreshment upon him.

Now, Jesus Christ is the Water of Life and the Bread of Life to such as live unto God. It is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their spiritual life that they should live upon Him. And as they do live upon Him, their thirst is quenched, their hunger is removed, and their spirit rejoices with a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Life and the food that sustains life are among the most precious things man can possess, and these are for your souls stored up in Jesus, "For the bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world."

Next to life in preciousness is light. What would not they have given in Egypt during those three days when the thick darkness was over all the land, even darkness that might be felt, if they could but have had light back again? It must have been a sad plight for Paul, and for his fellows at sea, when, for three days and nights neither sun, nor moon,

nor stars appeared. They could not tell whether there might not be a rock ahead, or a quicksand upon which the vessel would be broken. Oh, for light! How glad they must have been, at last when the black tempest passed away, and once again they could look round on the horizon and know their whereabouts.

Light! Oh, how precious would it be to you, if you were confined in one of those prisons which we have seen at Venice below the water's level--deep down, with winding passages, where even a refracted ray of light could never reach the prisoner--where he sat alone and felt for the wall, but could see nothing. "Truly" as Solomon says, "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Now, the soul has no light, no true light, no heavenly light but what Jesus brings. When a spirit is once made to feel its guilt, it is shut up in prison until Christ brings it light in the darkness of its dismay.

There is no hope to a convicted spirit till Jesus shows His atoning blood. There is no clear knowledge of the way of salvation till Christ brings the Light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in His own face. You who love Him know what brightness He has given to you--what light has irradiated your once dark spirit since you have known Him, and how your heart has laughed for very joy because He has turned again your captivity, and given you to rejoice in the light of His countenance.

Yes, He is precious because He raises us from the dead and gives us light.

I said that another precious thing which Jesus brings is love. There are hard hearts that think nothing of love--but methinks those who are as they should be, count love to be the dearest of treasures. I had infinitely rather be beloved of my fellow men than own a pyramid of treasure! He is a rich man who has a tender wife and dear affectionate children-- and is surrounded by a select circle of true and faithful

friends. Men die full often for want of love. It is wretched work to isolate ourselves and float like icebergs all alone, melting amid a desolate sea. A man will love a dog, or a bird sooner than be loveless. Captives have been known to fall in love with rats, and even spiders on the wall have been the objects of their affection--a little flower that could not speak, has been the prisoner's well-beloved friend.

We must have something to love. Oh, and what wealth of love Jesus brings into the heart when He enters it! You feel, then, that you have One to love whom you can love as much as ever you will, and yet it will not be idolatry. You have One to love who never can betray you, One whom you may trust, and yet never be unwise for having told to Him the secrets of your soul. You have in Jesus Christ One whom you may admire as you love, who will still be above you though you seek to rise to Him, and yet not proudly above you, for He will stoop down to all your lowliness and be as your own brother and your own friend. Oh, the joy of having Christ to go to!

All other friends will sometimes be unfriendly, and the best of them must part with you at your decease, or you with them when they depart out of this world unto the Father. But your Lord will never, never leave you. He will abide with you, and death shall only draw Him nearer--for then you shall see His face, and His name shall be in your forehead. And you shall be with Him where He is, to behold His Glory forever and ever. If you want love, you large-hearted ones, Christ is just the gem for such a case as your heart is! If you want a channel adown which the mighty streams of your pent-up affections may safely rush with vehemence in impetuous torrents, Christ shall be the fittest riverbed for your soul, and you shall find it joy and blessedness to love Him with all your might!

But I added that there was a fourth preciousness in Christ--giving

life, light, love--He gave also liberty. Oh, that magic word liberty! It makes men start to their feet. It is the word that made William Tell a hero, and the Bruce of Ban-nockburn more than a king. The thought of liberty makes men count jeopardy of life a small hazard if their country may be rid of a tyrant. May God be praised that great strides have been made and grand advances within these last few years, until even once priest-burdened Spain bears across her Sierras the trumpet notes of liberty, and her sons are free!

The highest liberty is that which emancipates the soul from sin. The grandest liberty is that which sets free the heart from fear, which leaves the soul without a dread, and enables the spirit to walk even in God's Presence without alarm-- the liberty which delivers us from the felon's dread, and bids us demand who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect. It is God that justifies, who is he that condemns, since Christ has died and risen again? What room is there for fear for the man who has been set free by the precious blood of Jesus? The liberty of the children of God--the liberty to pray, the liberty to talk with God as a man talks with his friend, the liberty to grasp the promises--the liberty to lay hold of God Himself, and say that the Divine attributes are all our own. This is what Christ has given us, and is He not therefore precious, most precious?

One word more before we leave our meditation on the precious gem. We have said that Christ is precious for His intrinsic work, precious for the service He renders. And we must now add, He is assuredly precious, actually so, from the place which He holds and ever must hold in Believers' hearts. Go and stand at St. Bartholomew's Hospital at Smithfield and you will see in the wall the tablet which is erected to the memory of heroic men whose ashes there testified years ago that they loved Christ better than property, better than children, better

than life itself, and accounted it their joy to die that they might hold unsullied their testimony to the Divinity, to the Sovereignty, to the Truthfulness, to the Salvation of Jesus Christ!

Ah, there were brave days in those black periods! Brave days when great hearts proclaimed by dying how dear Christ was to them. When a certain martyr was led out to die, they made his wife kneel down by the way. With a long line of his own dear children, eleven of them, like a descending set of steps, they were compelled, by his enemies, to pray their father and husband, by the love he bare to them not to die. He looked on them with tears, and said, "I love you as a man, and God knows I would do anything to live, and succor you, and enjoy your sweet society, my Dear Ones. But I cannot give up Christ," and he turned away to die.

It is so still, my Brethren, for if we are not called to die for Christ, yet I hope we could if we were called to do so. For at this moment nothing thrills us like Christ's name, nothing makes us so happy as to see His cause prosper. I have often asked, when I have looked upon you before me by the thousands year after year, and know that my speech has nothing in it remarkable, why it is that you gather so continually? Many others have asked the secret why this house is always thronged. The true answer is that I preach Jesus Christ to you, and it is written, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

I have no other theme, and I thank God I want no other. It is not worn out, and never will be. Though I should stand here by the space of the next six thousand years, I believe the house would still be filled if the testimony were the same. Despite London's sin, nothing strikes London's heart like the name of Jesus Christ. You may preach what you will of your learning and your philosophy. And you may talk pretty

things concerning God out of Christ, but you will never stir the souls of men as the preaching of the Son of God has done and will do. "In the Cross of Christ I glory, towering over the wrecks of time," and as long as we can make it still prominent in our ministry, we are sure that an enthusiastic response will be given in regenerate hearts, for unto those who believe He is precious still. So I must leave that point. There is the gem--happy are they that see it, happier they that have it.

II. The second head is "PRECIOUS PROMISES," or, THE CASE IN WHICH THE JEWEL IS CONTAINED. "Exceeding great and precious promises." All that the early saints had before Christ's coming was the promise of His appearing, and the mere promise of His coming was very precious to them. We are favored both with Christ and the promises, which are yes and amen in Him. They had the case, but it was locked up and they could not plainly perceive the jewel-- we have the opened case and the jewel in all its glory.

The utmost wealth of Heaven now lies at our feet. The fullness of the Lord is ours. Why are the promises precious? For the same three reasons that Christ was precious. Precious for their intrinsic worth, for they are Divine, the sacred utterances of God Himself. These are not the Words of man, but of God. I would burn my Bible tomorrow if I thought so meanly of it as some do. For they doubt its Inspiration, or fritter down its Inspiration till it means little or nothing. To me every Word here written is the Infallible deliverance of the Most High God, not to be questioned but believed.

Not because of its reasonableness, but because it has the stamp of Divine authority. Every promise of this Sacred Book is God's own promise spoken through His Prophets and Apostles, but yet spoken by Himself. The signet of Heaven seals every promise. You will never know

the sweetness of a promise till it is God's promise to you. They are precious promises because they are Divine. If they were the poetic effusions of elevated genius, where great men of old spoke but their own minds in happy hopefulness, they would be to us but as brass and iron.

But inasmuch as these reveal to us the mind of God, they are more precious than all the treasures of the mine. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for their price is above rubies. The least promise of God is too rich to be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx or the sapphire. Being Divine, the promises are innumerable. No promise of God ever changes. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven," "His Truth endures to all generations." Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He commanded, and shall it not stand fast?

The Lord has not spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth, He has not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain. The Lord has never called back a promise yet, but He has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away." His promises are precious because they tell of exceeding great and precious things. We have promises in the Bible which time would fail us to repeat, which for breadth and length are immeasurable. They deal with every great thing which the soul can want--promises of pardoned sin, promises of sanctification, of teaching, of guidance, of upholding, of ennobling, of progress, of consolation, of perfection.

In this blessed Book you have promises of the daily bread of earth, and of the Bread of Life from Heaven. Promises for time, promises for eternity--promises for yourselves, and promises for your children. All these are like the leaves of the tree, and Jesus is the goodly cluster. Or, if you will, the apple of gold hidden among the foliage of promise.

You have so many promises that all the conditions and positions of the Believer are met. I sometimes liken the promises to the smith's great bunch of keys which he brings when you have lost the key of your chest, and cannot unlock it. He feels pretty sure that out of all the keys upon the ring someone or other will fit, and he tries them with patient industry.

At last--yes--that is it, he has loosed the bolt, and you can get at your treasures. There is always a promise in the volume of Inspiration suitable to your present case. Make the Lord's Testimonies your delight and your counselors, and they will befriend you at every turn. Search the Scriptures and you shall meet with a passage which will be so applicable to you as to appear even to have been written after your trouble had occurred! So exactly will it apply that you will be compelled to marvel at the wonderful tenderness and suitableness of it. As if the armor maker had measured you from head to foot, so exactly shall the armor of the promise befit you!

The promises are precious in themselves, from their suitability to us, from their coming from God, from their being Immutable, from their being sure of performance, and from their containing wrapped up within themselves all that the children of God can ever need. The promises are precious, in the second place, because of their service to us. What will not the promises do for us? They will comfort us in distress. Give a child of God a Divine promise, let him be able to appropriate it to himself, and you cannot make his house dark, or his heart dark!

A promise believed in is a sun in the soul, and a song in the heart, marrow to the bones, and rejoicing to the spirit. He that has the promises, has Heaven and earth as his heritage. He shall ride on the high places of the earth. He shall suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath

are the everlasting arms. He shall dwell in safety alone, his fountain shall be upon a land of corn and wine--also his heavens shall drop down dew.

The promises of God not only comfort the Believer in adversity, but they strengthen him in service. Let the worker who is serving God, but desponds under a sense of personal weakness, receive such a cheering word as this, "Certainly I will be with you"--why, he flees from no labor, the promise makes him daring. "Fear you not, for I am with you; be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness." Who will be afraid after that? Difficulties vanish, impossibilities do not exist when the Lord is enlisted on our side.

The promises serve us in another admirable respect, for they elevate the soul. The man who has none of God's promises to enrich him may accumulate gold and silver, but he is earth-bound with his possessions. His soul tries to content herself with corn, and wine, and oil. But these things are only satisfying to our animal nature. Too often men grovel and hoard all the more as they increase in wealth. But he who grasps a promise is uplifted--his mind rises to the Hand from which every good and perfect gift is poured--and walking by faith in the promise of an unseen God, he is elevated in judgment and in taste, and becomes a better and a nobler man.

The promises, let me say, while they elevate the life, greatly cheer and gild with glory the deathbed. Ah, how delightful it is to die with a promise on the lips, feeling it in the heart! It may be in a very lonely cottage, and the stars may come and look through the tiles. And the hangings of the bed may be very ragged. And all the surroundings may be poverty stricken--but he who can lie there and say, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the

earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"--he that can rejoice in the promise of the Resurrection, and of the life to come, dies grandly!

His bed is changed into a throne! His little room, despite its poverty, becomes a palace chamber, and the child of God, who seemed so poor before, is perceived to be a peer of Heaven's own blood royal, who is soon about to take possession of his heritage, appointed from before the foundation of the world. Yes, the promises have been very precious to us in their influence upon our minds. And I am sure I can say they are precious because of their dearness to our souls at this very day. There are passages of Scripture which are carved on our hearts. You all possess some little secret treasures of some kind or other at home, treasures which bring before your minds heart-moving memories.

I have seen a mother go to the secret drawer to look at a certain little pair of wool shoes--with these in her hands, she would sit down and weep for the hours together. Ah, there were little feet that wore those shoes once, and they are laid all stiff and motionless in the lap of earth. I have seen a certain friend look at a ring--a little plain gold ring which he wears on his finger--and as he looked at it he has wept. There was a dear hand once upon which that ring was fondly placed in happier days.

Yes, and just in that way some of the promises of God have been so rich to us, and so connected with family memories and with personal trials and personal mercies, that they are unutterably precious. A poor old Christian woman was accustomed to make marginal notes in her Bible, and she placed against one text a "T" and a "P." The minister asked her what that meant, and she said, "It meant Tried and Proved, for I tried that promise on such-and-such an occasion, and found it true." "But, my dear Sister," said he, "I see up and down these pages, whenever there

is a choice verse a great 'P' put against it. What does it mean? "That means precious, Sir, for I have found it precious, and have therefore set my seal
to it."

We, too, have our Bible spiritually, if not literally marked after the same fashion, and often does the letter "P" appear against "exceeding great and precious promises" of God which have been sweet in our experience. We hope to die with a promise on our lips, and enter into Heaven to enjoy their full fruition.

I have now shown you that the jewel is of the first water, without a flaw, with none to match it, and that the case is of superior workmanship, worthy of the gem it holds. We must now turn to the third thing.

III. Faith IS THE PRECIOUS HAND which grasps the case and holds the gem. As time has gone, I shall not enlarge upon this third head, but shall briefly observe that faith is a most precious Grace because it opens and reveals the treasure hid in the promises. Until a man has faith he does not see the value of the promises. "Tush," says he, "the Bible is a dry book." Till a man has the faith of God's elect, he thinks very little of Christ. He may confess that he is a good example and a wise teacher, but, he does not say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Faith is to our souls what our eyes are to our bodies. Without eyes light would not be valued--without faith Christ is not dear. Without a mouth food would not nourish--faith is our mouth, and without faith Christ does not nourish us. A man might have a plank close to him when sinking but it would be of no service to him until he could lay hold of it-- faith is the hand that lays hold, and thus it becomes precious.

Faith first reveals to us what there is in Christ and in the Word, and

then it appropriates the whole. A soldier might be in the midst of a city where there was much spoil, but if his hands were cut off, how could he take to himself the booty?

Faith puts out its hands, and says, "This is mine, and that is mine." And what is more, faith carries right with it as well as might. Faith not only says, "I will take it," but faith says, "I have a right to take it," for God has made over to faith by a covenant deed, Christ and all the Inspired promises, too. If you have faith, your faith is the guarantee that the gem and the case are both rightfully yours. A mere piece of parchment, whatever is written on it, cannot be of any very great value in itself. And yet there are persons who would give large sums of money to recover lost documents, because upon the possession of those documents rests their claim to great estates.

Now, faith in itself is like a title-deed, signed, and sealed, and ratified, and on the possession of faith hangs your evidence of right to Christ and to the Covenant of Grace. Therefore faith becomes a very precious Grace. It sees Christ. It grasps Christ. It claims Christ by right, and by faith it holds to what it claims. Faith says of the Well-Beloved, "I hold Him, and I will not let Him go." It gets such a grip of Christ, that neither life nor death can unhand it.

Faith is precious, let me say, because it is rare. Notional faith is common, but the faith of God's elect is the work of the Holy Spirit, and is not vouchsafed to all. They are favored men, indeed, who exercise real faith. But, alas, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it." Wherever it is possessed, it is most enriching. True faith is like Midas, of whom it was fabled that his touch turned everything to gold. But faith has a safer joy than he, for his privilege became a punishment--for when he touched his meat it turned to gold, and he could not eat. And when he put the cup to his

lips, the fable says the wine itself turned into gold, and so he must needs die.

But faith has the power to enrich us, and add no sorrow. Faith touches trials and they become mercies. Faith touches affliction and she glories in them. Faith touches losses and they turn to gains. There is nothing that faith deals with but what is transmuted into good. Who would not wish to have this precious faith? Best of all, wherever faith is, it saves the soul. There never was a soul that believed in Christ Jesus--that rested on the merit of His precious blood--that was, or could be, cast into Hell. Sooner might the eternal pillars of Divine Truth begin to quiver, and the Throne of the Infinite Sovereignty be shaken from its place, than that Believers in Jesus be cast away. Has he not said it--"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand"? Do you believe in Christ? Then you are saved.

I have spoken so far of these three precious things. Just these few words by way of closing. Precious as these things are, they are yours, Christian. You have the precious faith. Then the precious promises are all yours, and our precious Christ is yours. How do you mean to live? With these precious things about you, do you intend to live like a beggar? I mean will you be sinful, low, groveling, worldly? Oh, rise to your rank, and as you are so ennobled, walk as becomes saints! Is Jesus Christ precious to you? Then serve Him with your best, give Him your precious things, give Him your lives, give Him your substance, give Him all that you have--do not give the Redeemer your odds and ends, such as you can afford to give without knowing it. Say, "He died to give me Himself. I will give Him myself in return--

'And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,

I love my God with zeal so great,

That I must give Him all.'"

Go and live like those who are rich to all the intents of bliss, and let your cheerful, your godly, your self-denying example be a protest to the unbelieving sons of men that you know the preciousness of Christ. Alas, for you who are unconverted. What shall I say to you? I am afraid I may preach up Christ a long time before you will believe me. It needs that the arm of God be revealed, before you will see these mysteries. The most of men remind us of the old story in Strabo, of the musician who thought himself very wonderfully gifted with power to create melody.

Before his audience he was pouring forth his notes, and as he thought--holding them all spell bound. But just then the market bell, with its vile tinkle was heard, and all his admirers except one person left him--for they could not afford to lose the chance of the market. The musician turned to his solitary listener, and complimented him upon having a soul above mere merchandise, and an ear which could appreciate music, so that he was not drawn away by the tinkling of a market bell. "Master," said the man, "I am hard of hearing, did you say the market bell had rung?" "Yes." "Then I must be off, or I shall be too late." And away went the last man, unrestrained by the bonds of harmony.

So when we preach up Jesus Christ, there will be some who will listen to us, and we perhaps think, "Now we shall surely win them," but ah, tomorrow's market bell--I will not say market bell--tomorrow's bell of sin, and bell of iniquity! The bell that rings to frivolities, and rings to transgressions--they will go after that. Anything that pleases the flesh will secure them. It may be there is one who has heard with unusual attention, and we begin to say, "This man has a nobler spirit." But then, perhaps, he has not yet felt the force of temptation, and

when he feels it he will go, too.

What urgent need there is for the Spirit of God to illuminate the dark judgments of the sons of men. May He do so. May He begin with you, dear Hearer, if up to now you have been blind. May He give you faith, and the promises, and Christ Jesus. It is my heart's deepest wish. The Lord grant it to you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 24

How God Condemned Sin

(No. 932)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 8, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His o wn Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3.

EVER since man has fallen away from God, two things have been highly desirable. The one, that he should be forgiven all his offenses. The other, equally if not more important, that he should be led to hate the sin into which he has fallen and love the purity and holiness from which he has become alienated. These two disabilities must be removed, or, looking at the matter from a loftier point of view, these two purposes of Divine mercy must be accomplished together.

It were impossible to make a man happy unless both be equally and simultaneously realized. If his sins were forgiven, and yet he loved sin, his prospects were dark. Over his future the direst portents would loom. If he ceased to love sin, and yet were lying under the guilt of it, his present condition would be deeply miserable rather than happy--his conscience pure and sensitive being tortured with pangs of remorse.

By what process can the two requirements be met, or the double purpose be achieved? To use our common words, how can man be both justified and sanctified, obtain clearance from his guilt in the sight of God, and then be made holy and meet to appear in His Presence? Human reason suggests that a law should be given to man which he should keep. This

has been tried, and the law which was given was the best law that could be framed. The Law of God written on the conscience, of which the Law given by Moses recorded in the book of Exodus is but a copy, is a perfect Law. There is not a command in it that could be omitted. There is not one single arbitrary precept.

The right must be true, the true must be right, and God's Law is never otherwise than right and true. "Of Law," said the judicious Hooker, "there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power." If, therefore, that Law which is promulgated from Heaven should fail to make men what they should be, the fault will not be in the Law, but in the man. As the text says, it was "weak through the flesh." Because of our flesh and our tendency to sin, our weakness and our defilement of nature, it could not do what, indeed, God never intended it should do--but what some have thought Law might do--repair the breach and to renovate the depraved. The principle of Law, which is, "Do this and you shall be rewarded," or, "Do that and you shall be punished," never can by any means achieve either of these two purposes.

The Law cannot forgive past sin. It evidently has nothing to do with that question. The Law says, "The soul that sins, it shall die." It can execute the sentence, but it can do no more. It ceases to be Law if it lays aside the sword and does not exact its own penalty.

Yet it has been thought that surely Law might make men love holiness, albeit experience and observation prove that it never has that effect. Very often men have needed nothing more than the knowledge of sin to enamor them to it, and they have loved sin all the better for knowing it to be sin. The Apostle Paul tells us that he had not known lust if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." There was a citizen of

Gaunt who had never been outside the city walls. For some reason or other the magistrate passed an order that he should not go outside. Strange to tell, up to the moment that the command had passed, the man had been perfectly easy and never thought of passing the line. But as soon as ever he was forbidden to do it, he pined, and sickened, and even died moaning over the restriction.

If a man sees a thing to be law, he wants to break that law. Our nature is so evil, that forbid us to do a thing, and at once we want to do the thing that is forbidden, and in many minds the principle of Law, instead of leading to purity has even offered opportunities for greater impurity. Beside, although you may point out the way of uprightness to a man, and tell him what is right and what is wrong with all the wisdom and force of counsel and caution, unless you can give him a heart to choose the right, and a heart to love the true, you have not done much for him.

This is just the province of Law. It can write out its precepts on the brazen tablets, and it can brandish its fiery sword, and say, "Do this or else be punished," but man, carnal man, only wraps himself the more closely in his self-conceit, and perseveres the more doggedly in his obstinate rebellion. He defies God, defers to his own reprobate mind, goes on in sin, and waxes worse and worse, knowing the judgment threatened, yet committing the transgressions prohibited. And he takes pleasure in those that do such things as his benefit companions.

Because of the malignity, as well as the infirmity of our flesh, the mere principle of Law will never do anything to purify or ennoble our moral nature. It has been tried by eminent teachers and social reformers.

Dr. Chalmers tells us that in his early ministry he used to preach morality, and nothing but morality, till, he said, he had hardly a

sober or an honest man left in the parish. The preaching of morality seemed to lead to immorality. Something more is wanted than merely to din into men's ears what they ought to be, and what they ought to do. Something is wanted more effectually to renovate the heart and move the springs of action. The water is nothing, and if you make it flow it is bitter. You want an ingredient to be cast into it that will heal its poison springs, and make them sweet and clear.

Now, in the text, we are told how God interposed to do by His Grace what His Law could not do. I will read it to you again--"For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." There are here, then, two things. First, what God did. He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh for sin. And then, what was the immediate result of this--He condemned sin in the flesh. After expounding these matters, I will try, in the third place, to show you how this bears upon the two desirable things I speak of, namely, the forgiving of the offender, and the making the offender yearn after holiness and purity.

I. First, and very briefly, let me tell you WHAT, ACCORDING TO THE TEXT, GOD DID--He sent His Son. We believe in one God, but though we understand not the mystery of the Divine Existence, we accept the propositions declared in Scripture, clearly apprehending the obvious sense of the terms employed, and heartily assenting to the Truth of the facts revealed. Thus we believe that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God--and we worship these Three as the one God--the triune God of Israel.

The second Person of that blessed unity in Trinity was sent by the Father to this earth. He is God the Father's Son, "the Only-Begotten of the Father." What that means we do not attempt to define--of the matter

of fact, we feel no doubt of the manner thereof--but we can offer no explanation. We suppose that the relationship implied in the words "Father" and "Son" is the nearest description that the Divine Mind can present to our feeble intelligence of that ineffable fellowship. But we do not assume, therefore, that it explains to us anything, or was intended to explain anything as the basis of an argument or of a theory concerning the profound doctrine itself. It is a great mystery.

Indeed, were there no mystery in God, He were no God to us. For how, then, should we fear Him with the reverence due unto His name? The fact of there being mysteries should never stagger us, poor worms of a day, when we have to think or speak of the infinitely glorious Jehovah. So, it came to pass, that in the fullness of time God sent His Son. He is called in the text, "His own Son," to distinguish Him from us who are only His sons by creation, or His sons by regeneration and adoption. He sent His own Son, and He sent Him in the flesh. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born into this world. He took upon Himself our manhood. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and the Apostles declare that they beheld His Glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth. The text uses very important words. It says that God sent His Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," not in the likeness of flesh, for that would not be true--but in the same likeness as our sinful flesh. He was to all intents and purposes like ourselves, tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. He was with all our sinless infirmities, with all our tendencies to suffer, with everything human in Him except that which comes to be human through human nature having fallen.

He was perfectly Man. He was like ourselves. And God sent Him in the likeness of sinful flesh. Though it is eighteen hundred ears ago and more, the Christmas bells seem to ring on. The joy of His coming is

still in our hearts. He lived here His two or three and thirty years, but He was sent, the text tells us, for a reason which caused Him to die. He was sent for sin. This may mean that He was sent to do battle with sin, or that He was sent because sin was in the world--or, best of all--He was sent to be a Sin-Offering. He was sent that He might be the Substitute for sinners.

God's great plan was this--that inasmuch as His justice could not overlook sin, and sin must be punished, Jesus Christ should come and take the sin of His people upon Himself, and upon the accursed tree, the Cross of ignominious note, should suffer what was due on our behalf. And that through His sufferings the infinite love of God should stream forth without any contravention of His Infinite Justice. This is what God did. He sent His Son to Bethlehem. He sent his Son to Calvary--He sent his Son down to the grave, and He has now recalled Him unto the excellent Glory where He sits at the right hand of God.

II. Do you ask you now, secondly, WHAT WAS THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF THIS? Why, Brethren, the immediate result was that God condemned sin. Let me show you how He did it. God--I must use language which is for us, not for Him--must, out of necessity, if He would save men and yet not violate His Justice, send his Son to condemn sin. For it said, "This sin is such an evil, such a plague, such a curse, that it cannot be stamped out of the world unless God Himself comes down among the sons of men."

His usual Presence among men in the power that sustains nature, it seemed, was not enough to put out sin. So venomous was the serpent that there must be born a Seed of the woman that should bruise that serpent's head. This world of ours was such an Augean stable, that Omnipotence, itself, must come down and turn the sluices of Divine perfection right through the hideous heap, or else washed it never

could be. Therefore down from the highest Glory came the Savior, that He might achieve a task which the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh--but which He in the likeness of sinful flesh undertook to accomplish.

Moreover, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth condemned sin. You can often condemn an evil best by putting side by side with it the palpable contrast--the purity to which it is so thoroughly alien, so totally opposite. So blameless was the conduct of this most blessed Man of Nazareth throughout His entire career, that even those who accept not His Deity do homage to His integrity. We have had in our own day, and in our midst, we grieve to say, some who have blasphemed our faith with bitterest words. But even they have paused as if they stood abashed when they came to survey the Character of Him whose Divinity and Mission they refused to acknowledge. They have seen about His life a something that they saw nowhere else, and if they have not adored they have admired.

There was a condemnation of sin in His very look. The Pharisees felt it. They could not meet or encounter Him without discovering and exposing what hypocrites they were. All sorts of men felt it. They could not fail to see through the purity of His life what crooked, ugly, deformed lives their own were in comparison with His. And thus the very existence of Christ, and the example of Christ, condemned sin.

But what shall we, who are His disciples, say to that assemblage of Divine Grace found only in Him, each sparkling with peerless luster, and all blending with such exquisite gracefulness that we are at once moved with awe and touched with love as we contemplate Him?

Such majesty, yet such meekness in His manner. Such solemnity, yet such tenderness in His speech. So impartial in judgment, yet so forgiving in temper. So full of zeal, yet so equally full of patience. So keen to

detect malice, yet so slow to resent it. Such a wise Mentor in the inner circle of His followers, yet such a gentle sympathizing friend. Say, my Brethren, I think some of us never commit a trespass or betray an infirmity, but we say, and say it to ourselves, Would Christ have done this? And the remembrance of His holy, harmless life condemns sin in our conscience.

God condemned sin still further by allowing it to condemn itself. The scoff has always been on this wise, "Oh, sin, sin! Well, it is a mere trifle," and the most of men disdain to allow that their particular transgressions are at all heinous. "No, we never killed anybody. We never committed adultery. We are not thieves--ours are only sins of a common sort. There can be no harm in us." But see now, God seemed to say, "I will let sin do what it can. I will let sin ripen in this world. I will let it grow to its perfection. And men shall see from now on what sin is from that sample."

"What am I aiming at," do you ask? Why, there came into this world a Man perfectly innocent, harmless, gentle, meek, loving, tender. All His Words were love. All His actions were kindness. He raised the dead. He healed the sick. He spoke nothing but peace and goodwill towards men. And what did sin do? Sin said, "Away with such a Fellow from the earth! It is not fit that He should live." Sin murdered the perfect Man, as it would lay violent hands on all who interfere with its evil maxims and base habits. It would utterly destroy all goodness if it could. It convicted itself. Ferocious is a wild beast, it is always to be feared and hated, for it never can be tamed or trusted.

That Man came into this world on an errand, and that errand was one of disinterested mercy and pure affection. He need not have come. He had nothing to gain by it. He never did gain anything while here. They would have made Him a

king, but He would not be a king. His was all disinterested kindness, benevolence to His bitterest foes. When they nailed His hands to the wood, they could get nothing vindictive from His lips. He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He came to save His enemies. Now, surely sin will not touch such a blessed Being as this! Surely sin will say, "I hate His holiness, but I reverence His philanthropy"!

Not so, sin shouted, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" Sin made a jest of His prayers, and mocked His tears. As we hold and believe, this Man was no other than God, God's Son. You know how the willfulness and atrocity of this sin against Christ is represented to us in the parable of a certain man that had let out his vineyard unto husbandmen. He sent unto them his servant that at the time of the crops they should pay a portion of the produce, but they treated him despitefully, and when he sent another they beat him, and stoned another.

At last he said, "I will send my son. They will surely reverence my son." But they said, "This is the heir. Let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." And so with this very God, they seemed to say, "Let us kill Him." And though they could not give a death blow to His Deity, they showed that they would if they could. And red-handed sin stands out before the world this day as a deicide. It would wreak its vengeance on Him that inhabits eternity if it could, and hurl destruction at the Lawgiver, to secure a triumph for its own lawlessness. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," and the great aim of human nature is to get rid of God in fact, as well as in faith. This it attempts to do, either by discoursing of Him in an abstraction, or by setting up blocks of wood and stone in simple credulity, as a correct representation of His fashion or His attributes.

To the one true and glorious God men will not pay any allegiance. If sin had power equivalent to its purpose. Had it means to accomplish its menace, it would cast down the Throne of the Most High, and assail Jehovah Himself in the Heaven of His dwelling. Oh, you abominable thing, Sin! You stand convicted. God shall smite you, you accursed thing! You have condemned yourself by your own act and deed--even where your craftiness has been foiled and your desperate prowess has issued in defeat.

Thus, Brethren, I have shown you that Christ's coming condemned sin, Christ's life condemned it, and by putting Christ to death, sin condemned itself. But here comes the peculiar doctrine of our faith. God condemned sin by bruising Christ, by suffering Him to be put to death, by deserting Him in the hour of nature's extremity, by permitting His soul to undergo an agony beyond all conception. Sirs, our sin--your sin, my sin--the sin of as many as do believe or ever shall believe in Jesus, was laid on Him, "who His own Self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." He was the Father's Best-Beloved. He had never offended, and the Father loved Him. Will He not spare Him? Will He not spare Him?

Infinite love loved us, and infinite love loved Christ, but infinite love said, "I cannot pass by sin without punishment. What Justice demands, must be done." And it was love that made the Father pour forth the vials of His wrath upon the head of the Only-Begotten Son, till in the garden He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Oh, there was an inner sweat, of which those outward drops were but the faint types! His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and then on the Cross He died.

I have often painted you that scene, but for the present I forbear. His inward sufferings, His soul-sufferings, were the soul of His

sufferings--

'Twas thus the Lord of Life appeared,

And sighed, and groaned, and prayed, and feared.

Bore all Incarnate God could bear,

With strength enough, and none to spare." Then and there He made expiation for man's guilt. What a condemnation that was of sin! Methinks it were as though the righteous Judge of all the earth had said, "I cannot suffer sin, I cannot pass by sin, even if it lies on the Innocent One. I must smite even My own Son if sin is imputed to Him. I cannot and will not clear the guilty. The Judge of all the earth am I. If My Son should be spared, or My Law should be put on one side, the thousands of worlds I govern might well be in high revolt against Me."

Poised was the cause in the impartial scales of Justice, and on His Son He visited our transgressions. Into His hands the cup of wrath was given. Against Him the sword of vengeance was unsheathed. Of Him the uttermost penalty was ex-acted--that we, for whom He stood as Surety--might be clear by His dying, justified by His rising from the dead, and from then on accepted in the Beloved.

Now I know it will be said, "But why did not God exercise the sovereign prerogative of mercy, and at once forgive sin? Why did He not by His own absolute fiat condone the offense and pardon the offenders?" I reply, how, then, could God have condemned sin? If sin is only such a simple misdemeanor as an arbitrary act of God can forgive, then its evil were not infinite in turpitude, the prolific parent of crimes and curses numberless. But if there must be an atonement for it, an Atonement as wonderful as that which I have essayed to preach to you, then sin descried in the light of that altar-fire where it was propitiated, appears worse than felonious, worse than any word I can

use, more hideous than any ghastly form I can depict.

Its summary condemnation alone could vindicate the unimpeachable holiness of the Judge. Someone else may say, "But if the righteous Law is really so spiritual, and carnal man so weak, why not alter the Law and adapt it to the exigency?" I reply again, because such a procedure would not condemn the sin. On the contrary, it would condemn the Law. It would be an admission that the Law originally was too severe. It would be making an apology for sinners, and encourage them to sin greedily with both hands. To relax the prescript and forego the punishment, were to trifle with sin and make the Law to be a contemptible thing.

The criminal will ask to have it altered still, and lowered to suit his basest passions. But would not a part-punishment have sufficed, and then let the rest be excused? I answer, No! That, too, would have condemned the Law for having asked a greater punishment than was absolutely necessary. Whatever was laid down as being the necessary punishment of sin must be enforced, or else God changes, the statute is set aside, and the Law breaks down altogether. The only way to condemn sin to the full is this--let the sin be punished, and if there is one found who, without a breach of justice, may be permitted to suffer in the place of another, let him so suffer.

But let care be taken that it is no sham, but a reality. That sin, from the dignity of the sufferer, from the amount of the suffering, from the completeness of the atonement, is effectually and thoroughly condemned.

Thus far have I led you. God has sent His Son into the world, and has thus condemned sin by His Son's life and death.

III. Now, thirdly, I come to the main business of this evening, which is TO SHOW YOU HOW THIS DOES WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO. There were two desirable things, you will remember, that I started with. The first was

that the offender should be pardoned. You can clearly see how that is done. If Jesus suffered in my place, from now on it becomes not only Mercy that absolves me, but Justice that seals my acquittal--

"Since Christ has my discharge procured, And freely in my place, endured The whole of wrath Divine; Payment God cannot twice demand, First at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine."

If Jesus paid the debt, it is paid, and I am clear. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Your only question, dear Hearers, is--have you a part in the sufferings of Christ? Was He a Substitute for you? According to this grand old Book, on which we fix our trust as an Infallible guide in this matter, Jesus died for every soul that trusts Him. So is it written--"He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." Have you these personal evidences? Do you without question trust Him? Then you are forgiven. You are this night absolved. You may rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you have now received the Atonement. Your sins, past, present, and to come, are all blotted out--

"Here's pardon for transgressions past, It matters not how black their cast And, O my soul, with wonder view, For sins to come, here's pardon too."

The red mark is drawn across the bill, it is discharged. The load of obligation is gone. From its burden you are released. The sin of the Believer has ceased to be. Christ has been punished in his place. Is not that simple enough for all of you to understand, and Scriptural enough for all of you to receive?

But how comes the second necessity to be supplied? How does this tend from now on to make such a man pure in heart, and produce in his very soul an aversion and a total abhorrence of sin? This is not difficult to apprehend if you will give it a little quiet consideration. When the

Holy Spirit comes with power into a man's heart, and renews his nature (oh,
matchless miracle!)--a miracle that has been worked many times in this house--at that moment the unhallowed and the impure are made chaste. The dishonest are made honest, and the ungodly are made to love God--"for if any man is in Christ he is a new creature."

Such motives as the following now begin to influence his mind--The man says, "Did God, instead of forgiving my sin without a penalty, make the anointed Substitute smart for it? Then I reverence the Lawgiver, the mighty Lawgiver who would not, even though He is Love itself, suffer His Law to be broken. I reverence that dreadful Judge of all the earth, who, though I am His child, yet since I had offended, would not spare me for my sin, but executed the penalty that was due to me upon Himself.

Himself! For Christ His Son is One with Him, and dear to His Father's soul. Why, more than that, it makes me feel an intense love to Him. What? Was He so just, and yet was He so determined to save me, that He would not spare His only Son, but freely gave Him up to die? O blessed God, I tremble at Your Justice, which yet I come to admire. But oh, Your love--what shall I say of it? It wins my love. I must love You, my God--the Just and yet the Gracious One. I must love You."

Then there comes into the heart an enmity against the sin which caused the suffering of Christ. "What?" says the heart, "Did sin make my Redeemer, who gave Himself for me, suffer? Then, away with it! It must be a foul, vile thing, to put such a blessed One as He to death. I will not tolerate it." It makes the soul cry, "Revenge" against itself--a blessed vengeance it decrees against all sin. "Bring out the gallows, and let sin be hanged. The dearest idol I have known, bring out the hammer and the axe, and let it be broken in pieces. The choicest

transgression I have ever nurtured in my bosom--I see what a viper it is, and I shake it into the fire! Away with it! If it grieves my Christ, and makes Him bleed, my own Beloved Savior--away with it, away with it!"

And let me tell you, there is another matter that comes in and supplies the basis for holiness, such a basis as cannot be found anywhere else. The man says, "Now I am pardoned through the love of Jesus Christ and the shedding of His precious blood. I have God for my Father, and He is my Friend. There is no one to part me from Him. My sin was laid on Another, it has been expiated, and it is gone--I am saved, I am forgiven." The man is happy. The man is cheerful. The man is joyful, and what springs up? "Now," says he, "there is that glorious Christ of God who has worked this for me, and I see Him with the eye of faith. I see Him in Heaven, and I am His man--body, soul, and spirit. I am not my own. He has bought me with His blood. I lay myself at His feet. What He bids me do I will do. What He asks of me I will give. What He forbids me, it shall be my joy never to touch."

Here breaks forth in the soul an enthusiastic love to the Person of Jesus Christ, which, as it burns and glows like a refining fire, becomes a great motive--power to the spirit to pursue holiness in the power of God. When do the soldiers fight best, Sirs? When you have read their rules to them as to how they might keep place, and how they must load their guns, and fire in due order? No! Law does not inflame the soldier with martial ardor, though it is good in its place. But just when the battle lingers--take an instance from our own history--just when the battle was about to turn with the Ironsides, and the Cavaliers were coming on with one of Rupert's hot charges, ready to break the line, and the brave old Ironsides were half inclined to turn, up came the general old Noll, riding on his horse, and they passed the word

along, "It is he, boys! Here he comes!"

And every man grew into a giant at once. They stood like iron columns, like walls of granite, and the Cavaliers as they came on broke like waves against rocks, and dashed away, and were heard of no more. It was the presence of the man that fired each soldier. And so it is now with us. We believe in Jesus Christ. We know that He is with His Church. He was dead, but He rose again. He has gone to Heaven, but His spirit is with us--King of kings, and Lord of lords is He. If He seems to sleep in the midst of our ship, yet He sleeps with His hands on the helm, and He will steer the vessel rightly.

And now the love that we bear His name steers our souls to holiness, to self-denial, to seek after God, to make full proof of the faith and the fellowship of the Gospel, to seek to become like God, and to be absorbed into God that He may be All in All. This is what was wanted--a stimulus potent enough, under God's Grace, to break through the barriers of sin. What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God has accomplished by sending His own dear Son in the likeness of sinful flesh for sin. And having condemned sin in the flesh, He has now removed its guilt, and destroyed its power.

To the best of my ability I have thus set before you a doctrine in which my own heart finds perfect rest. I would that you all had the same rest, the same sweet heart's ease in your breasts. Two words of counsel I must address to you before I close. One is, I do beseech you to receive this doctrine. It is of God. It is true. They who first bore witness to it were humble fishermen. Unsophisticated as they were, they had no motive for inventing it. Indeed, it is a theory which they had not the brains to invent if they had tried. They nearly all of them died for it. They never gained honor or emolument by professing or publishing it, but they endured contumely and persecution, even to the

loss of their lives, for testifying to what they saw and heard.

Ah, since then the Church has had long lines of martyrs. Who could help hearing the same witness, fortified with the same assurances, whatever it might cost them, however they might be ridiculed as ignorant, old-fashioned, and not up to the progress of the age? I pray you accept this--especially would I address myself to those of you whom I have preached to for so long, who yet are unsaved. I do not know what forms of speech to use with some of you, or in what shape to fashion my appeal. If I thought that coming round to your pews and kneeling down before you, and entreating you to receive Christ would have any effect upon you, I would gladly do it.

I have prayed very anxiously that if perhaps my voice should not be the one that God would bless to your conversion, my brother's voice next Sunday, or that of someone else on the following Sunday on which I shall be absent, may have the effect of leading you to Christ. O that you may but be saved! I will make no terms with God if you will but accept Christ. I am somewhat of the mind of a dear little girl, who is now dying, if she has not already departed. She sent a little note in pencil to her minister, and it was delivered at the Prayer Meeting.

A little Believer in Christ, nine years of age, asks the prayers of the people for her father, for he is an unbeliever. She was visited by her minister, and she said to him, "O Sir, I have asked Father to come and hear you preach. I thought he might get saved, but he mocks at it, and will not come. But, Sir, he must hear you preach one day, and that is when I shall be buried, for I shall soon be with Jesus. O Sir! When he stands at the grave, do be sure to tell him about the love of Christ, and say that I asked you to do so, for perhaps when I am dead that might help to break his heart."

Oh, yes! If anything would break your hearts, that were a mercy if it

happened. If the preacher himself were dead, if his interment in the grave could bring you to the Savior, it were a cheap price to pay. Only may God save you! May the Holy Spirit renew you! May the Savior wash you in His precious blood and I shall be well content.

The other word is this. You that profess to be Christians, to believe what I have told you--take care that you do not give the lie to it. Not everyone that says, "I am a Christian" is so. No, no. It is a heathenish nation this, that has had the impudence to call itself Christian. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it," is as true today as when Christ uttered it. To be a Christian in name is worth nothing. To be a Christian in the power of these truths, having received Christ Jesus the Lord, and being rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith as you have been taught--that is to be a Christian in all good conscience.

If your lives should be unholy, if you trades people should be dishonest, if you rich people should be proud and selfish, if you poor people should be envious, if any of you should be drunken, if you should be loose in speech, if you should be unclean in deed or in conversation, men may say--"The preacher has only laid down a theory, let him show us facts." Well. But I can show facts. I bless God that I have it in my own soul to say that I believe the most of you do so live as to prove these things. But even so, there are others of you of whom I tell you, even weeping, that you are the enemies of the Cross of Christ. Enemies! Of all enemies the worst of enemies, too, because while professing to be actuated by them, you live in opposition to the teachings of Jesus.

O blessed Savior! Wounded worse by Your treacherous friends than by Your open foes. O holy Faith! More damaged by your professors than by

your antagonists. The Lord grant us to walk and live in holiness, and in His fear, till the Master shall come, as come He will a second time without a sin-offering unto salvation. Finally, Brothers and Sisters, farewell. Let me dismiss you with a blessing.

Angelic Studies

(No. 933)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1870

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Ephesians 3:10.

THE "principalities and powers in heavenly places" to whom the Apostle here refers, are, no doubt, the angels. These bright and glorious spirits, never having fallen into sin, did not need to be redeemed, and therefore, in the sense of being cleansed from guilt, they have no share in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Yet it is interesting to notice how our Lord did, as it were, pass and pass again their shining ranks when He sped His way down to the regions of death, and when He came back triumphant to the realms of Glory.

Thus in one place "we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," and in another place we learn, "that the Father raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion." It is possible that the mediation of Christ has a bearing upon them, and has from now on confirmed them in their holiness, so that by no means shall they ever be tempted or led into sin in the future. It may be so, but this much seems to be evident, that though they had no direct share in redemption, they feel, nevertheless, an interest in it, and are to be instructed by its results.

The sublime plan of the Gospel of the Grace of God, which is so entirely beyond the compass of our natural faculties that we could never, by searching, have found it out, appears to have been equally beyond the grasp of angelic intelligence. It was a mystery that excited their wistful enquiry--until by the Church (that is to say, by the Divine Counsel and conduct in forming and perfecting the Church) there is made known unto them the manifold wisdom of God as they have never learned it before. They have kept their first estate, and have been obedient to God's behests. They delight to be known as the servants of God, doing His commandments, and hearkening unto the voice of His Word. They are appointed to exercise some sort of power over various parts of God's creation, therefore they are called "principalities and powers." Certainly they are engaged in singing Jehovah's praise. Much of the music that rises up before His Throne comes from the harps of spirits, pure and immaculate, who have never known sin. Yet, though they are thus pure, thus engaged in worship, of such eminent rank in the universe of God, they are never represented as indifferent spectators of anything which our mortal race can do or suffer, but their sympathy with men is constant.

Do they not watch over the saints? Is it not written, that they "encamp round about them that fear the Lord"? Are they not charged to take care of the saints, to bear them up in their hands, lest they dash their feet against the stones? Angels, we know, have often been messengers of God's will to the sons of men. They have never shown any reluctance--on the contrary, great has been their joy to bear God's tidings down from Heaven to earth. And their sympathy even with fallen men, with men who have grievously sinned and gone astray, is shown by the fact that they "rejoice over one sinner that repents, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

They are, as it were, in yonder gilded vessel, untossed of tempest. But they have sympathy with us in this poor heavy-laden boat, tossed with tempest and not comforted. I see them there on yonder sea of glass mingled with fire. I hear their harps, as incessantly their joy goes up in music to the Throne of the Most High. But they do not look down with scorn on us poor denizens of this dusky planet. On the contrary, they delight to think of us as their Brethren, as their fellow servants, as it will be the consummation of their happiness when we shall all be gathered to the Church of the First-Born, that they shall make up the innumerable company of angels that surround the blood-washed throng.

I. The subject of our meditation, which will be brief, resolves itself into a question, HOW EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH THE CHURCH DO ANGELS COME TO SEE THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD? Some other matters in connection with this we shall have to speak of afterwards.

Who can doubt that the angels had seen much of the wisdom of God in creation? With faculties keener and more elevated than ours, faculties that have never been blunted by sin, they can perceive the various contrivances of God's skill both in the animate and the inanimate world. Doubtless as each new star has been minted by God, as each planet has been struck off like a spark from the everlasting anvil, angels, those sons of the morning, have lifted up their songs, and have poured forth their paeans of joy and gladness.

They have seen the wisdom of God in the greatness of creation--in every sphere they have been able to perceive it, for their vision is far more comprehensive than ours. And they have also, no doubt, seen that wisdom in all its minuteness as manifest in the delicate structure of organized beings, and the skillful economy of the operations of creative power. For there again they are able with the singleness and certainty of superior optics to perceive what only after long years we

have been able to discover--and that by reasoning from the ingenuity of the works to the excellence of the design.

What a scale of survey must a seraph have! How readily can we imagine an eye that takes in at once the landscape of the world! He need not confine himself to one single spot in God's universe, but with rapid wings he can steer far and wide over the infinity of space. May he not pause here a moment and there a moment, and with a glance peer into the multiform wisdom of God in all the ten thousand thousand worlds that stud the realms of space? Yet with all that facility of observation, it seems that the angels have some parts of the wisdom of God to learn. They have some lessons of heavenly science to study which creation cannot unfold to their view--to be ascertained and certified by them only through the transcendent work of Redemption which the Lord has carried on in His Church.

Fix your attention for a moment on the word "now" as it is used in the text. On that word, it seems to me, much of the meaning hangs. Long before our Lord came into the world God had been pleased to reveal somewhat of the wisdom of His Grace in the types of the old Law. These were full of significance, but at the same time not free from perplexity to the minds of most men. They appear not to have been very intelligible, even to the angels, for they are pictured as standing over the Mercy Seat, with wings outspread, looking down upon its golden lid, anxiously enquiring, but not clearly discovering the secret of the old Covenant dispensation.

Peter says, I suppose in allusion to this, "which things the angels desire to look into." But Paul here vehemently sets forth the yearnings of his heart in the exercise of his ministry, "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the

intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God."

May we not infer from this that though angels saw Moses and Aaron, and the long succession of priests that followed them. Though they doubtless mingled invisibly in the solemn gatherings that went up to Mount Zion, and heard the chants of the glorious Psalms. Though they saw the streams of blood that flowed at the altar of burnt offering, and marked the rising clouds of smoke that went up from the altar of incense that was in the Holy Place before the Lord, they had not as yet discovered the wisdom of God in its fullness and clearness, the spotless mirror of His power, the reflex image of His glorious perfection?

But it must have remained for them to learn it from the Church! Since Christ has come, angels are to be students of the manifold wisdom of God as revealed in His work towards His people, preparing them for that grand climax--the espousal of the Church and the marriage of the Lamb. To come closer to the matter we must trace it progressively, as though it were step by step that the angels pursued their study, and acquired an insight into this manifold wisdom. It may be they do so. Certainly among the children of men there is much pleasure in the getting of knowledge. The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

As we gradually break up fresh ground, decipher that which is obscure, sift out analogies, solve difficulties, and follow out the tracks of history in one continuous line, our enjoyment of study rises to enthusiasm. Do you not think that the angels perceived the manifold wisdom of God now that they began to understand what man was and what man is? They must have already seen that God had created an order of pure spirits who served Him faithfully and never sinned. There was one

form of wisdom displayed in that. Other spirits, equally pure, went astray, and in the wisdom of God-- for there is wisdom in it--these were suffered to continue astray, reserved in chains until the judgment.

Soon the angels perceived that God was about to make another intelligent creature, not altogether spiritual, but a spiritual creature that should be linked with materialism, a creature that should abide in a body of clay. And that God intended to make this creature a mixture of earth and Heaven--such a one that he should occupy the place which fallen

angels had left vacant. They discerned in this at once the wisdom of God. He had formed a pure spirit. He had fashioned material substances. Now He was about to make a creature in which the two should be combined, a creature that should be spiritual, and yet should be material.

But before this creature should be permitted to take his place forever at the right hand of God, he was to be permitted to pass the test of temptation. Being tempted, he was to fall into sin. Out of the condemnation into which he should sink he was to be elevated by an act of Divine Grace. From the guilt of that sin he was to be cleansed by a matchless system of substitutionary sacrifice. And then, after having been alienated in heart, he should nevertheless become as pure as if he had never been conscious of evil! And contaminated with it, he should be redeemed from it and stand in allegiance to the Most High, to serve Him with as absolute a perfection as if he had never transgressed or lost his first estate.

Herein is manifold wisdom, that the Lord God should make so strange a creature, that He should be formed of the dust of the ground, and yet created in the image of God. A creature that should know sin, and

whatever of pleasure there might be in it, and yet be restored to purity and holiness. A creature who though awhile estranged in heart, and guilty of rebelling with a high hand against his Creator, should return to its allegiance through the infinitely wise workings of God's Spirit, and from now on should remain forever the liege servant of God! And, something more, the child of God would be lifted up and exalted into a nearness of connection and intimacy of communion with the Great Father of Spirits into which no creature had ever been brought before! In that grand design, the angels must have seen much of the sublime wisdom of God, and that conspicuously through the Church.

But, Brethren, may not the admiration of angels at the unfolding of this wisdom have been increased by the mystery in which it had long been shrouded from their apprehension? Observe that Paul was exulting in a revelation "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed unto His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit." What use will he make of it? First he looks round among the saints and sounds the note of welcome. Then he looks out among his fellow men and proclaims it to the Gentile world. And at length he looks up and descries among the angelic throng, creatures of noble mind and exalted rank, who could sympathize the joy and hail the solution of so grand a problem.

Be it remembered that the decree had previously been proclaimed from the throne of the Most High, for, "when He brings the First-Begotten into the world, He says, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Yet the means by which the counsels of God concerning Christ and the Church should be brought to pass had not thus far been shown. With what pleasing wonderment, therefore, would the principalities and powers in heavenly places regard the plan as it was unsealed! How well might the Apostle look forward to those ages to come which have yet to prove the

reality of all that has been foreshadowed!

The Truth of all that has been prophesied. And (the work now in progress being completed) the actual form and fashion of all that from the beginning was predestinated. Even while the mystery was unexplained, it was not for pure angelic minds to doubt. Still their thoughts must have been full of marvel, and startling questions must have occurred to them. Shall the Only-Begotten Son of the Father take the nature of man into union with the Godhead? Can it be safe to put such a creature as man into so sublime a relationship with the Creator? Will pride never inflame his breast and provoke his soul to transgress? By what strange process shall he be made meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in

light?

While the details are concealed, the destiny seems incomprehensible. It is therefore that the Church becomes as a museum which angels may visit with ever-expanding interest and ever-increasing delight. Over the minutest particulars of the Divine workmanship in the saints they may pore with pleasure. For there they have open to their observation by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. And all this redounds to the glory of the Savior. That creature, man, when thus elevated, can never be proud, for he remembers what he was. If ever the feeling of exultation crosses his mind, he transfers the honor to Christ, who can receive it as his rightful due.

There is not in Heaven, of all the creatures, a humbler creature, though none more elevated--made to have dominion over all the works of God's hands, with all things put under his feet. He is made to be akin to Deity itself by virtue of union with the Son of God, and yet safe to stand there, without cause to fear that he should pervert his high prerogative or usurp any adoration or prerogative which does not belong

to him. The process through which he has passed--his annealing, as it were, in the fire of his fall and of his repentance--his deep obligations to Sovereign Grace, shall make it safe to grant that he shall sit with Christ on His Throne. Even as Christ also overcame, and is set down with his Father on His Throne.

I talk of these things feebly and superficially, but I am persuaded that this is a subject which angels can think of with enchantment, and as they think it over they see transparent proofs of the manifold wisdom of God. But to come down to more familiar topics. Probably you will be more impressed with the excellence of this wisdom as you look at the first principles of Christianity, than if you would arrest your attention in any refinements of reasoning. The wisdom of God is clearly seen by angels in this--that though God was dishonored in this world by sin--that sin has redounded to His greater honor.

Satan, when he led men astray and tempted them to rebel, thought he had marred the Glory of God, but he never did more palpably outwit God. As Augustine ventured to say of the Fall, "Happy thought," so, when we see how God's mercy and His love have shone resplendent through that dreadful breach, we can only admire the wisdom of God which has thus outmatched the subtlety of Hell. The serpent was exceedingly wise, but God was far wiser. Satan's craft was dexterous, but God's wisdom was infinite in its prescience. Wisdom has outmatched craft. Is it not glorious to think that this world where God was dishonored most is the world where He shall be most revered?

There is no such display of the attributes and perfections of Godhead in the whole universe beside as there is here. On our blighted soil God has stood foot to foot with moral evil. God incarnate, the Son of God, has sustained the conflict, and won the victory! While the heel of Christ was bruised, the head of the dragon has been most effectually

broken! A triumph that God would have us commemorate in time and in eternity has come through the sin that threatened the destruction of the world.

This wisdom of God is to be seen in the way that our redemption was worked. The doctrine of Substitution is a marvel which, if God had never revealed, none of us could by any possibility have discovered.

You remember how it was. We had sinned and were condemned. How could God be gracious and yet be just? How could He keep His Law and yet at the same time show His mercy towards us? Of old that problem was solved by the Suretyship of Christ. He who had determined to be Man put Himself from before the foundation of the world into our place, and offered Himself to God as the Head of the race in Covenant that He might make recompense to the broken Law.

Angels could not have conjectured this, but when it was made known to them, how could they refrain to chant fresh songs to the praise of Him who could undertake so loving a responsibility? It became necessary when Christ was our Surety, that He should afterwards take upon Himself our nature. Oh, how it must have surprised the angels when they heard that the Son of God was coming down to earth to be born of a virgin!

What marvel must there have been when the announcement was made through the courts of Paradise that He was going down to Bethlehem!

One of the angelic number who had been sent to attend Him proclaimed His advent, but while he was making the announcement, "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host," who now came in to swell the song, "Glory to God in the highest! On earth peace, good will toward men." The swell of that music--how grand! The cadence of those simple words--how charming! Yes, the angels must have discovered something of the wisdom of God when they saw that God thus tabernacled among men, that the Word was made flesh in order to be capable of

carrying out His surety-engagements, and really become a Substitute for those who had offended.

I think His whole life must have struck them with wonder. They must often have observed wisdom in His actions and in His prayers, in His speech and in His silence. But, when at last He came to die, methinks even cherubim and seraphim were wrapt in amazement. That He should stoop from Heaven and become a friend to the fallen race might surprise them much. But that He should stoop to die must have appeared utterly incomprehensible! Something more of the love and wisdom of God should yet be revealed to them. I think our hymn must fitly describe how they gathered round that Cross--

"And could their eyes have known a tear, They must have wept it there."

When they beheld the griefs and torments of the dying Son of God, the Lamb of God's Passover--when they heard Him say, "It is finished!"--what a door must have been opened to them! They saw, then, that He had finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. And then, perhaps, they saw more clearly than before how Christ, by suffering, put an end to our sufferings. And by being made a curse for us had made us the right-eousness of God in Him. If they marvelled during the three days of His slumber in the tomb, His Resurrection must have opened up another door to them. And, when after His forty days' sojourn, they came to meet Him with glad acclaim.

When they joined Him, and with Him rode up to the gates of Heaven, singing, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." When they came in triumph with "the Lord mighty in battle, the King of Glory," in that procession to His Throne, they must still have been more and more amazed, and said one to another, "What thing is this? What mighty

marvel! He that became Man to suffer, is the very One that now rises to reign. He who was born to die now lives forevermore. Behold, He is now the Head over all things, and made to have dominion over all the works of God's hands, for it has pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell!"

Thus, Brethren, though time and voice fail me, permit me to say the whole history of our blessed Lord, who is the Head of the Church, is making known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God in such a way as they never could have otherwise seen it.

The wisdom of God is seen through the Church in the Holy Spirit's work as well as in the work of Christ. It is "manifold wisdom." You know the children's toy, the kaleidoscope. Every time you turn it there is some fresh form of beauty. You seldom see the same form twice. So it is with nature, each time and season has its special beauty. There is always variety in its scenery--diversities of form and color are strewn throughout the world. You never saw two hills molded in the same pattern, or two rivers that wound after the same fashion from their source down to the sea. Nature is full of variety. So is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In calling sinners to Christ, there is singleness of purpose but no uniformity of means. Your conversion, my dear Friend, in the main outline, is very much like mine--yet your conversion has its distinctive incidents. God's wisdom is displayed equally in bringing you in that way, and in bringing me in another way. I believe there will be found evidence at the last of the wisdom of God in the very date, the very place, the very means in and by which every soul is brought to believe in Jesus. And angels will, no doubt, be able to perceive in every conversion some singular marks of beautiful

originality proceeding from the inexhaustible Artist of Grace, the Holy Spirit.

That same wisdom will be seen in the biography of every convert--how the Lord afflicts, or how He comforts. How He upholds us, how He keeps back that which cannot yet be endured. How He gently leads us, how He makes us to lie down. We find fault, sometimes, with the way of Providence because we do not understand it. When we shall get a clearer sight of it we shall see that every mark and line was dictated by His love, and ordered by His Infinite Counsel. As each Christian shall be conformed to the likeness of Christ, angels will see in the products of Grace fresh displays of the manifold wisdom of God.

I could suppose that the death of a martyr must be such a spectacle as those holy watchers regard with extraordinary interest. Would they not have gathered around such a woman as Blandina, for instance, who was made to sit in a red-hot chair, after having been tossed upon the horns of a wild bull? Yet constant to the last, she maintained her faith in Christ while passing through the torture! Pure spirits as they were, they must have commiserated the physical anguish and admired the spiritual triumph of this feeble woman thus devoted in her love to their Lord and Master.

Yes, you ministering spirits, you who live to serve our Eternal King, surely you must rejoice at the loyalty of those servants of His who die for His Truth. In late years, since this House of Prayer was built, when the martyrs of Madagascar were burned at their stakes for Christ--as they stood erect in the fire, and began to sing--the angels, celestial vocalists as they are, must have been ravished with a music that they could not emulate. And when they breathed the prayer, "Into your hands we commend our spirits," the angels must almost have envied them the ability of serving God in that sphere of suffering, and the

possibility of bearing in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus.

Yes, and when they have seen your boldness and your constancy, your self-denial, and your patience. And when they have heard your importunate prayers and groans, as you have pleaded for the souls of others, seeking with tears to bring others to Jesus, I do not doubt that they have ascribed to the manifold wisdom of God the production of such luscious fruits from such inferior creatures! Fruits that bring to His name so much of Glory, and so much of renown to His Grace. In all the saints, through the history of their vocation and the development of their sanctification, angels can discern the manifold wisdom of God.

The subject is far too large for me. I shall leave you to think it out, after thus introducing you to but a few aspects of it. There is much room for meditation as to how these bright and happy spirits do and shall see the wisdom of God in the salvation of the Church.

II. But do you now ask, DO ANGELS GAIN ANYTHING BY THE CHURCH OF GOD? I think they do. Certainly they acquire increased knowledge. With us knowledge is sometimes sorrow. To know is often to mourn. What the eye does not see the heart does not rue. "Where ignorance is bliss"--and it sometimes is--there are those who think, "it is folly to be wise." But ignorance is not bliss in Heaven. Knowledge increases the joy of the angels, and I will tell you why--because it makes them take a greater delight in God when they see how wise and gracious He is. If it is possible for the angels to be happier than natural innocence and honorable service can render them, they must be happier through knowing and seeing more of God, as His attributes are reflected and His perfections mirrored forth in the Church.

Angels, methinks, will be enriched by the society of the saints in Heaven. Commerce always enriches, and commerce between angelic and human natures will be enriching to them both. They love in Heaven--they

show their love by rejoicing over repenting men. They will be glad to see us there. I do believe they will make much of us, as we do if we have seen some poor child reclaimed, and afterwards grow up to honor. We like to think of such an one. It brings the tears into our eyes that our Father did so good a deed for the orphan, the pauper, or the outcast. And will not the angels rejoice over those in whom the Father's mercy has worked such wonderful happiness?

Again, to my imagining (can it be illusive?) angels are gainers by the Church because they get nearer to the Throne of God than they were before. Another order of beings, our own to wit, is advanced. Surely when one creature gets near to God, all unfallen creatures are promoted. God, in vital union with the creature, was not to be conceived of until Christ came down to earth, and clothed Himself in manhood, thus raising creatureship nearer to God by just that length. So angels, by inference, seem to me interested in the honor that Jehovah has put on His works--the endowed works of His own formation. Do you not think, too, that perhaps they can see God better in Christ than even they did before? Is it not possible that even they who first did veil their faces with their wings in the presence of the Almighty, because the brightness of glory was excessive, may now stand with unveiled faces and worship God in Christ? I think it is so. They never saw much of God before until they saw God veiled in human flesh. There was too dazzling a splendor for them till the interposing medium of the manhood of Christ came in between them and the absolute Deity. It may be so.

And may not there be a reflex sense of gratitude in the very heart of angels when they see us in Heaven, or while they see us wending our way there? They perceive what it would have cost to have restored them had they been beguiled by sin, and therefore what debtors they are to God

that they were never suffered to fall. Does it not make their state and standing more and more joyful to them when they see in us how the righteous scarcely are saved, and at what an expense men were lifted up from the ruins of death and the dread doom of the damned?

Why, methinks they say not one to another, with Phariseeism--"We thank You, great God, that we are not as men are." No, they say, with lowliness of mind--"We bless You, O God, that we were permitted to stand in our fidelity, and were not left to the natural weakness which might have succumbed to temptation, for You charged even Your angels with folly, but You have held us, and here we are to bless Your name."

It may be so. It may be so.

III. Let me detain you one minute more while we meet the question, WHAT IS ALL THIS TO US? Ought it not to make us prize the Gospel? If the angels think so much of it, oh, what should we think? If they who have only seen it, esteem it so, how ought we to value it who have tasted it? If they admire the veins that filled the Fountain, what shall we say who have washed in that Fountain? If they wonder at Christ, who took not on Him the nature of angels, how shall we admire Him who espoused the house of Abraham and the seed of Adam? Let us appreciate the Gospel beyond all price, emolument, or honor.

How, too, should we study it, if it is the research of angelic intellects! Is the Church their schoolbook from where they learn lessons of the Divine wisdom, because no science is equal to that of the wisdom of God in Christ revealed in His Church? O be not, you converts, ignorant of the Word of God! Be not oblivious of the operations of God in your own souls! The angels desire to look into these things. Do you look into them? Blessed shall you be if you abide in the study of the Word of God! You shall be like trees planted by the rivers of water that bring forth their fruit in their season. O do

apply every faculty you have to acquire increasing knowledge of that which angels love to study.

And now take courage, you feeble-minded ones, and never fear again the sneer of the man who calls the Gospel folly. Account him to be the victim of folly who despises this manifold wisdom. Shall I set the judgment of a poor puny mortal against the judgment of an angel? I suppose that even Newton, and Kepler, and Locke, and those mighty master spirits, would be mere infants compared with seraphs. Those great men loved to study the Scriptures, and when your modern pretenders to a little smack of philosophy come in and sneer at our holy Gospel, we can well afford to sneer at them. What are their sneers to us?

In proportion to a man's ignorance is generally his impudence when he meddles with the Gospel. I think it was Hume who confessed that he had never read the New Testament and said he never would. Yet he was one of the most glib in caviling at that of which he knew nothing. Ah, you skeptics, pretenders, and scoffers--we can well afford to let you rail.

But you can ill afford to rail when angels are awed into wonder, and so would you be if there were anything angelic about your temper, or anything of right wisdom in your attainments.

Last of all. If this is so, how we ought to love Christ, we who has a saving interest in it, and how they ought to tremble who have it not! Unsaved Men! Unsaved Women! If it needs manifold wisdom to save men, then men's ruin must be very great, and your peril must be very imminent. If it amazes angels to see how God saves, it must be a terrible destruction from which He saves them. That destruction is coming upon you--its dark shadows have already began to gather round you. How great your folly to refuse a salvation so wise, to reject a Savior so attractive as Jesus!

Think of His loving gentleness and consider the simple way in which He saves--believe and live! The supplies necessary for your salvation are all waiting. There is nothing to be done. It is all complete. There is nothing to be found. It is all ready. Salvation is finished. What a fool must he be that will not have it! O stretch out your withered hand and take it! God give you power. If you say "How? "I answer thus--Trust, trust, trust! Come and confide in Christ. Rely upon Christ, and He will save you. God grant you Grace to do it at once, and He shall have the praise. Amen.

Chapter 26

Bands Of Love

(No. 934)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." Hosea 11:4.

GOD, by the mouth of His Prophet, is here expostulating with His people for their ungrateful rebellion against Him. He had not treated them in a harsh, tyrannical, overbearing manner, else there might have been some excuse for their revolt. But His rule had always been gentle, tender, and full of pity. Therefore, for them to disobey Him was the very height of wanton wickedness. The Lord had never made His people to suffer hard bondage in mortar and in brick as Pharaoh did, yet we do not find that they raised an insurrection against the Egyptian tyrant. They gave their backs to the burdens, and they bore the lash of the taskmaster without turning upon the hands which oppressed them. But when the Lord was gracious to them and delivered them out of the house of bondage, they murmured in the wilderness, and were justly called by Moses, "rebels." They had no such burdens to bear under the government of God as those which loaded the nations under their kings, and yet they willfully determined to have a king for themselves. No taxes were squeezed from them, no servile service was demanded at their hands. Their thank offerings and sacrifices were not ordained upon a scale of oppression. Their liberty was all but boundless--their lives were spent in peace and happiness, every man under his own vine and fig

tree--none making them afraid.

Yet, since other nations bowed before the rule of despotic kings, these foolish people were not content till they had raised up between them and the Divine government a ruler who would take their daughters to be confectioners in his kitchen, and their sons to be servants in his court. God bore with their ill manners, and gave them a king in His anger. And then, even under the reign of kings, how graciously the Lord their God treated them! If it was necessary for their punishment to give them up for awhile to foreign dominion, how He soon took away the affliction when they cried unto

Him!

Though they were chastised, yet--

"His strokes were fewer than their crimes, And lighter than their guilt."

The whole dealings of Jehovah with His people Israel were full of matchless tenderness. As a nursing mother with her child, so did God deal gently with His people. Yet, hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! The Lord has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Him. Did a nation ever cast away her gods, even though they were not gods? Were not the heathen faithful to their idols? But Israel was bent on backsliding--her heart was set upon idolatry, and the God of her fathers was disregarded.

Jehovah was despised, and His gentle reign and government she set herself to destroy. This was the complaint against Israel of old. As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man. As men were in days of yore, so are they now. God has dealt with us who are His people in an unexampled way of loving kindness and tender mercy, and I fear that to a great extent the recompense we have rendered to Him has been very much like the ungrateful return which He received from the seed of

Jacob of old.

This morning I shall ask you to think of the tender dealings of God with you, my Brothers and Sisters, that you may not be as Israel was. But that feeling the power of the Divine gentleness, you may serve your God with a perfect heart, and walk before Him as those should who have partaken of such benefits.

The first thing we shall have to consider is the Lords way of leading His people to their duty--"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Secondly, the Lord's Grace in giving His people rest--"I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws." And, thirdly, the suitable nourishment which He gives to His chosen--"I laid meat unto them."

I. First, then, THE LORD'S WAY OF EXCITING HIS PEOPLE TO ACTION. We who have believed in Jesus Christ have passed into a new condition with regard to God. We were once, at the very best, only His subjects, and having sinned we were scarcely fit to be called subjects, but rebels, traitors--disgraced with high treason. But now, since Divine Grace has renewed us, we are not only his pardoned subjects, but what is far better, wondrous Grace has made us his Beloved sons and daughters! we are now not so much subjects of His crown as we are children of His care.

We are by Grace brought into an entirely different relationship from that of fallen nature, and we are ruled and swayed by motives and regulations altogether unknown to the unregenerate sons of men. The way in which God brings His people to serve Him is that to which I now ask your consideration. It is a way pre-eminently peculiar in its tenderness and kindness. The only cords are cords of a man, and the bands are bands of love. In the heroic days when Xerxes led his army

into Greece, there was a remarkable contrast between the way in which the Persian soldiers and the Grecian warriors were urged to combat. The unwilling hosts of Persia were driven to the conflict by blows and stripes from their officers. They were either mercenaries or cowards, and they feared close contact with their opponents. They were driven to their duty as beasts are, with rods and goads. On the other side, the armies of Greece were small, but each man was a patriot and a hero. When they marched to the conflict it was with quick and joyous step, with a martial song upon their lips--and when they neared the foe they rushed upon his ranks with an enthusiasm and a fury which nothing could withstand.

No whips were needed for the Spartan men-at-arms. Like high-spirited chargers they would have resented the touch thereof. They were drawn to battle by the cords of a man, and by the bands of patriotic love they were bound to hold their posts at all hazards. "Spartans," would their leaders say, "your fathers disdained to number the Persians with the dogs of their flock and will you be their slaves? Say, is it not better to die as freemen than to live as slaves? What if your foes are many, yet one lion can tear in pieces a far-reaching flock of sheep. Use well your weapons this day! Avenge your slaughtered sires, and fill the courts of Shushan with confusion and lamentation!"

Such were the manly arguments which drew the Lacedaemonians and Athenians to the fight--not the whips so fit for beasts, nor the cords so suitable for cattle. This illustration may set forth the difference between the world's service of bondage, and the Christian's religion of love--the worldling is flogged to his duty with fear, and terror, and dread. But the Christian man is touched by motives which appeal to his highest nature--he is affected by motives so dignified as to be worthy of the sons of God. He is not driven as a beast--he is moved as a man.

Let me explain. In the first place, the Christian man never works to obtain eternal life. He knows it to be a gift and receives it as such. The unconverted man thinks that there are certain things which he ought to do and by the doing of which he will be saved. And he selfishly, if he is awakened, sets to work to perform these actions with more or less of perseverance in the hope of obtaining pardon for sin and salvation for his soul. Being a son of the bondwoman, he finds his way to Sinai. But the Christian man knows that salvation is not the wage of service, but that life is the gift of God, the dowry bestowed on us by Sovereign Grace--and therefore he never looks for salvation from the Law. As a child of the promise, he wins the New Jerusalem by birthright and by the Covenant of Grace. Legal motives cease to affect the instructed Believer--while he was out of Christ he did, in his ignorance, seek to work out a righteousness of his own--but now he has come to Christ and seen everlasting righteousness finished and brought in. He is saved--he knows that he is saved, and he knows also that he is saved by the merits of Another.

Now, being saved, he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, not that he may save himself, but because he knows he is saved, since God Himself is working in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure. If that man is engaged as a minister of Christ he will never preach as though his salvation depended on his preaching. Let him be occupied in his trade or calling, he will not be honest and sober, conscientious and devout, because he thinks to save himself thereby. No, verily, he has turned his hope away from his own works to the work of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and therefore that motive of trying to win salvation by merit is disgusting to him.

He is so far from yielding to its power, that he utterly loathes it.

Let such arguments affect the ungenerous spirits that can live for

themselves, but over us it has no power. We are saved, and now being saved. Out of love to the Father and the Well-Beloved we are impelled to service.

Neither does a Christian seek to serve God with the idea that he is to keep himself in spiritual life by such service. I have heard it more or less insinuated that although we are saved at present, and have eternal life in present possession, yet all depends on our own faithfulness. And if we are not what we should be, eternal life will die out and the Divine Grace given will be withdrawn. I must confess I find in the Bible nothing of the kind, neither do I pray, nor read the Scriptures, nor attend Divine worship with the remotest idea of sustaining my own spiritual life.

The spiritual life which the Holy Spirit gives us cannot die. It is eternal as the life of God. It is a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. A true Believer in Christ is most safe, for he can never perish, neither can any pluck him out of Christ's hands. The dread of being driven out of the Divine family is not a motive capable of stirring his heavenly nature. He knows that because Jesus lives he shall live also. He is not forced to holiness by dread of being forsaken of his God. He does not believe such a thing to be possible. He leaves a motive so slavish to the poor sons of Hagar who, like their bondslave mother, cannot dwell with the child of promise.

As for the Christian, other and higher considerations rule him. He is drawn by the cords of a man and by the bands of love. Further, you will see the gentleness of the way in which God calls His people to duty in the fact that He is pleased to accept their service even when it is, in itself, far from being at all worthy of His smile. O my Brethren, if you and I had to be saved or to be preserved in spiritual life by our doings, then nothing but perfection in service could answer our turn.

And every time we felt that what we had done was marred and imperfect we should be full of despair.

But now we know that we are already saved, and are forever safe, since nothing remains unfinished in the work which justifies us. We bring to the Lord the loving offerings of our hearts, and if they are imperfect we water with our tears those imperfections. We know that He reads our hearts and takes our works not for what they are in themselves but for what they are in Christ. He knows what we would make them if we could. He accepts them as if they were what we mean them to be. He takes the will for the deed often, and He takes the half deed often for the whole.

And when Justice would condemn the action as sinful, for it is so imperfect, the mercy of our Father accepts the action in the Beloved, because He knows what we meant it to be. And though our fault has marred it, yet He knows how our hearts sought to honor Him. Oh, it is such a blessed thing to remember that though the Law cannot accept anything but what is perfect, yet God, in the Gospel, as we come to Him as saved souls, accepts our imperfect things!

Why, there is our love! How cold it often is, and yet Jesus Christ takes pleasure in our love! Then, again, our faith, I must almost call it unbelief, it is often so weak--and yet though it is as a grain of mustard seed, Jesus accepts it, and works wonders by it. As for our poor prayers, often so broken with so many distracted thoughts in them, and so poverty-stricken in importunity and earnestness, yet our dear Lord takes them, washes them in His blood, adds His own merit to them, and they come up as a sweet savor before the Most High. It is delightfully encouraging to know that in our sincere but feeble service the Scripture is fulfilled--"a bruised reed shall He not break, and a smoking flax will He not quench." Even our green ears of corn may be

laid on the altar. If we cannot bring a lamb, our turtle doves and two young pigeons shall be received.

Then, further, our gracious Lord gives us promises of help in all holy exercises. Under the Law it is, "Make the bricks," but there is no promise of straw. Under the Gospel we have help for every time of need. You know how it is written, "The Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Our good works are rather God's works than ours, in so far as they are good. He first of all gives us good works, and then rewards us for them, as if they were all our own. "You have worked all our works in us." "I am like a green fir tree, from me is your fruit found."

Yes, blessed be God, all true fruit of Grace comes from Him. Is not this a charmingly powerful motive to service? Though it is so different from the reasons which drag on the sons of men, do we not feel it to be mightily operative? The Lord will help us in the service, and render unto man according to his work. He has said, "Fear you not. For I am with you: be not dismayed. For I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness."

Furthermore, as if more fully to show how we are drawn with the cords of love and bands of a man, all the motives which are used to impel us to service appeal to that which is most honorable in our regenerated manhood. We have frequently heard the objection of those who oppose the Doctrines of Grace, "If I believed as you do, that all true Believers are saved, and shall never perish, I should live as I like." Our answer is, "It is highly probable that you, as an unconverted man, would do so. But if you had received a new nature, and all your tastes were changed, matters would stand otherwise."

For a Christian to live as he likes would be to but live an absolutely

pure and perfectly holy life. The Holy Spirit implants within His people at their new birth a dignity and nobility of character to which they were utterly strangers before. And they would not, and could not, sin as once they did. They cannot sin as before because they are born of God. The things which they took pleasure in before, now seem to them groveling and despicable. They seek after higher and nobler objects. I believe that Gospel motives, if they were addressed to all mankind promiscuously, would prove a failure as much as if we tried to excite enthusiasm in all men by poetic imagery or profoundly philosophical argument.

But Gospel motives to God's people are as nails fastened in a sure place. They are suitable, and therefore effectual. You could not hope to govern the nation by the same ruler and methods with which, as a father, you order your family. In your family it may be there is not even a rod, certainly there is no policeman, no prison, no black cap. Children are ruled by a father on a scheme essentially different from the rule of magistrates and kings. There are maxims of courts of legislature which would never be tolerated in the home of love. Just so, within the family of God there are no penal inflictions, no words of threat such as must be employed by the great King when He deals with the mass of His rebellious subjects.

You are not under the Law, else there would be judgment and curses for you. You are under Grace, and now the motives by which you are to be moved are such as might not affect others, but which, since you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, most powerfully affect you. It is a great thing for a man to feel that God does not now appeal to him as He would to an ordinary person, but that having given him a new nature, He addresses him on higher grounds. "I beseech you therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice,

holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

We have known of a boy in school whose conduct has been greatly improved when the master has had wisdom enough to appeal to his better qualities. When the lad has felt that his age, or superiority of position have demanded better things of him, he has yielded to the motive. In dealing with His people, the Lord appeals to their higher characteristics. He does not say to the regenerate man as He did to Adam, "Do this and you shall die." He says to him, "He that believes in Christ shall never die. I will never leave you nor forsake you. I have loved you with an everlasting love: what, then, is your return for all this love?"

The really saved soul, overwhelmed with gratitude, exclaims, "My God, my Father, I cannot sin, I must live as You would have me, I must serve You. Such love as this touches my heart, it stirs everything that is noble that You have implanted in me. Tell me what Your will is, and whether I have to bear it or to do it, I will delight in it if You will give me all-sufficient Grace." Yes, the Lord always appeals to the higher points in the Christian's constitution, and thus He draws us with the cords of a man, with bands of love.

Let us add that love is always the great master force in moving Christians. Terror is but little used--threats and wrath are laid aside. Gospel arguments are molded in this fashion, "The love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not from now on live unto themselves." Jesus seems to plead, "I have made you, even you, poor defiled one, to be precious in My sight. Do

you love Me? If you love Me, keep My commandments, and feed My sheep. "I have bought you, even with My heart's blood have I redeemed you out from among the people, and from the chief men thereof. Does not My love constrain you? Will you not give yourself to My service, to promote My Glory?" All-conquering Love is master of all our forces. He is the Commander-in-Chief of all our powers. When the love of God is manifestly shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, our duty becomes our highest delight, and the work of God our highest joy. Rutherford, speaking of how his Lord encouraged him with sweet fellowship while he was serving Him, says in his quaint way, "When my Master sends me on His errands, He often gives me a trinket for myself."

By which he means, as sure as ever God sent him on His errands He gave him a penny for reward, as we do to boys. How often have our prayers for others returned into our own bosom? How often do we find it a blessing to bless others? Have you not found it so? You have been trying to comfort God's people, and the comfort has been reflected upon your own soul. You watered others and thereby were watered yourself. You were trying to praise God--you were not thinking of yourself--but as you sang you obtained a blessing, your heart mounted higher and higher, and you blessed your Lord with an exhilaration of spirit you had not known before.

The praises of God's people are poured forth, even as larks give forth their songs. They sing, not because they ought, but because they delight to sing. They fulfill their nature, and find in it their happiness. Virtue and holiness become to God's people a delight--they take pleasure in it--sin is hateful, but holiness is lovely to them. As it will be their highest Heaven to be perfect, so now their nearest approach to Heaven is when they are by God's Spirit sanctified and led

into nearness to Christ.

Thus I have, without dwelling on the mere words, given you the sense of the first clause of the text, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." The impelling, urging powers that lead Christians on to consecration and holiness are never those which befit slaves or carnal minds. They are such as are worthy of the dignity of the sons of God, and they are full of tenderness, and kindness, and love. For the gentleness of God is great towards His people.

II. I shall now ask you to turn to the next sentence, and observe HOW THE LORD GIVES REST TO HIS PEOPLE--"I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them."

Sometimes a common illustration may be more forcible than a more refined comparison, and I shall give you in a moment a very homely one. The passage here means that God treated His people as farmers, when they are merciful, treat the bullocks with which they have been plowing. They lift off the yoke from them, withdraw the muzzle, and then give them their food. But our explanation of it shall be a sight more common. Out there in yonder street stand still and observe. Yonder inn is a common halting place. Watch it a moment. Here comes a huge, heavily loaded van.

Three or four steaming, panting horses have been laboriously dragging along this mountain on wheels. They are greatly in need of rest. The word is given, and the poor animals gladly stand still. Down comes the driver from his box. The reins are dropped and he proceeds to take the bits out of the poor creatures' mouths. How pleased they seem to be to get rid of the bits which have been so long between their jaws. Nor is the rest all the horses get, they shall have a draught of water, or the well-filled nose bags shall be fitted upon them and they shall rest and feed.

I thought of this text when I looked at that sight the other day. It is the exact explanation of the text, "I was to them as they that take off the yoke from their jaws, and I laid meat unto them." As you see wearied horses contentedly and happily take their rest and feed, you have before you precisely what the Prophet meant. God takes the bits out of His servants' mouths, the yoke from their backs, brings them their food, and bids them feed and rest and be happy.

Let us take, then, the first point, "I was to them as they that take off the yoke." Now, the Lord has taken off from His people a great many yokes, or the same yoke under different aspects. He has taken many bits out of their mouths. First, there was the old yoke of ceremonialism--what a burden that must have been to Believers under the Law! There was this they must not eat, and that they must not drink, and the other they must not wear. There was this to be done on one day and that to be done on another. It was always touch not, taste not, handle not, and so on. They were environed and surrounded with all sorts of legislation, and hedged in by laws about their houses, their clothes, their beds, their drinking vessels. Legislation about birds and beasts and fishes--about everything, in fact.

But now Christ has taken off that yoke from us, and "touch not, taste not, handle not," stands as an abrogated Law. We have given to us a liberty, a freedom from every yoke of bondage--and though there are some who are for bringing in new ceremonial laws, with holy places, and holy days, and holy things, and priests, and rites, and ceremonies--and I know not what--these are the children of the bondwoman, we regard them not. Under the Law of Liberty which Christ has proclaimed, we are free, indeed--

"Wherever we seek Him He is found, And everyplace is hallowed ground."

Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused. Now it is the

heart that is holy or unholy, and not the thing. What our Lord has cleansed, we count no longer common or unclean. Carnal ordinances of outward things are put
away as childish things. We worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

Better still, He has taken from us the yoke of the Law. Oh, do you not remember, Beloved, when you carried that yoke because you were trying to save yourselves by your own works? You supposed that if this sin were relinquished, and that virtue were pursued, you might at length grow acceptable with God. But after months and perhaps years of such attempts, you found yourself as far off from acceptance as ever--as indeed you would have been if you had lived ten thousand years--for by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified.

All that the Law can do is to bring a knowledge of sin, but it is not capable of bringing acceptance with God. At that time, how the yoke of Divine Justice pressed upon you heavily! You felt you had sinned and that God must punish sin, and you did not understand that He had laid help upon One that is mighty to save. This yoke galled you very terribly, but, do you remember when He took away the yoke from you, and removed this bit from your mouth? Well does my soul remember it, when I saw Jesus put under the Law for me, that I might no more be under the Law.

When I saw Him fulfill it, and satisfy all its demands that I might be absolved--oh, what joy to perceive that I was not condemned! The Law had no more dominion over me, and I was not under the Law but under Grace! Everyone here who has believed in Jesus has received just such liberty as this--and now the Law does not alarm you, neither does your

past sin make you to tremble--the Law is satisfied, your sin is pardoned, and God has given you this blessed rest, this quiet resting-place.

Further than this, you have also been delivered from the yoke of sin. Time was when we strove to be rid of sin. We had been made to see its evil nature, and we were sufficiently alarmed and awakened to see that Hell would follow upon it. Therefore we desired to escape from evil habits--but, alas, we found that the Ethiopian might sooner change his skin, and the leopard his spots--than we cease to do evil. Our works, though we strove to make them good, remained imperfect. The old leprosy tainted all.

Sin, like an iron net, encompassed us and held us fast. Nor could we be free, struggle as we might, until that pierced hand which took away the guilt of sin also released us from its power. By Jesus' help habits which seemed invincible were soon overcome. Customs which bound us fast were broken as Samson snapped the green withes. We were free by the power of God's Holy Spirit from the service of Satan and were enlisted under the banner of Christ. Oh, what freedom is this! May the Lord continue to give us more and more of it till the last link of sin's cruel chain shall be removed and our freedom of holiness shall be complete.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope that to many of you God has also been pleased to give great rest from the yoke of care. We ought not to be burdened with cares, and yet some are so. Our Savior has bid us by the example of the fowls of Heaven, and of the lilies of the field, to leave care to our God. We are told by His servant, the Apostle, to be "careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication to make known our requests unto God."

A minister was in a house where there were some five or six little

children who were playing about and making merry noises, and their father said to the minister, "Yes, Sir, they may well be happy. These are their best days, for they have a father to care for them, they have no need to care for themselves." When that good man went to Church next Sunday he was very much surprised to hear his minister quote his words. He said these were the good times for God's children, for they had a Father to care for them, and they might be as free from care as little children are. Yes, when we live by faith we are just as free from care as the lambs in the field, or the birds in the woods--casting all our care on Him who cares for us. He that bore the burden of our lifelong sin way well bear the burden of our daily troubles. And He is in this respect to us as one that takes off the yoke from the jaws.

So also, I would add, has the Lord often delivered us from the yoke of fear. There is fear of death which haunts too many. Fear of coming trial alarms others. Fear of I know not what, a sort of indefinable dread comes over not a few. But when we fly to our God, all terrors, whether palpable or impalpable, are scattered like the mists before the wind. When we can but once come to God in Christ, and say, "My God, my Father, my whole trust is in You, and my heart resigns itself to You," then straightway we can sing --

"Should earth against my soul engage, And hellish darts be hurled, Now I can smile at Satan's rage, And face a frowning world."

Get near to God, Believer, and you will be calm. Commune with Heaven and be at rest. The peace of God passes all understanding, and it is this which Jesus waits to give you. There is no reason why you should be heavily burdened. Return unto your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

III. And now we will take the last clause, "And I laid meat unto them." Here we have THE NOURISHMENT WHICH THE LORD GIVES HIS PEOPLE. Humble as

my illustration is, I must take you back to it, and point to the nose-bags of the horses, for the illustration is just for our country what is meant by the text. The farmer would put up his fodder to the ox when he took off the yoke. Now observe what it is that God gives His people.

First it is meat. "I laid meat unto them." Look back on your experience, Christian--see what meat God has made you to live on. No soul ever ate a morsel more dainty than this one Substitution. I do think that this is the grandest Truth in Heaven and earth--Jesus Christ the Just One died for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It is meat to my soul. I can feed on it every day, and all the day. When some of the other Truths of God's Word seem to be too rich for me, I can always find appetite for this, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Yes, the Lord has given us that Truth for meat.

Then take the word "Covenant," what meat there is for His people there! He has made a Covenant with us, ordered in all things and sure. In Christ Jesus, God has entered into solemn league and compact with His people, and they are His and shall be His. There is meat for you! Every promise of God's Word in its turn becomes meat for faith. The doctrine of election--what food is that--what butter in a lordly dish! The doctrine of the immutability of God's purpose, and the consequent security of His saints! The doctrine of the union of God's people with Christ, their perfection with Him, their acceptance in the Beloved. Why, here is meat that the world knows not of--meat whereof if a man eats he shall live forever. Yes, Jesus Christ Himself in His blessed Person, what food is He? His flesh and His blood, are they not meat, indeed, and drink, indeed?

But what is meant by this word in the text? "I laid meat unto them." You see the meat God has given us, but how does He lay it unto us? Why, just as with the ox, the food was not put so low down that he could not reach it, nor so high up that he could not get at it, nor so far away that he could see it but could not feed upon it. "I laid meat unto them." So God has a way of bringing home precious Truths to His people. He does not put it so low down that they may say, "I never experienced such trouble as that. I was never brought into such depths of soul agony as that, and therefore I cannot enjoy that Truth."

No, He lays the meat to their experience, so that if they have never had a very deep experience, yet there shall be food convenient for them. Sometimes when I have heard a sermon, I have thought that the preacher put the food too high. I was anxious enough to get at it, but his experience was a happier one than mine, his knowledge of God's ways more extensive than mine, and his way of putting Truth more elevated than mine--I could not reach his teaching. But you see, God does not place the fodder too high or too low, but He lays meat unto us.

Have you ever found it so? You have said, "That sermon was meant for me. That text, why the Lord seemed to have written it after my troubles happened, just to fit and suit my case." Mark you, Brethren, the preacher may try to lay meat unto you and yet fail, for though he may think he understands your experience, he may fail to touch it. But when He that knows all things and tries the reins of the children of men--when He means to give His people a feast of fat things full of marrow--He knows how to lay the meat where they will get at it, and to give them an appetite at the same time as He gives them the meat. And their souls shall be satisfied, and their mouths shall praise Him with joyous lips. See, then, the goodness of God to you--you have been set free from bondage, the yoke is taken off your neck--and you are fed on

angels' food, satisfied with the bread of Heaven.

Now what is to come out of all this? You see I am coming back to the point I began with--all this is the way in which God is leading you to serve Him. He has set you free from the old yoke, that you may take upon you His yoke, which is easy, and His burden, which is light. He has given you food, and it is in the strength of that meal you may ran in the ways of His Commandments, and serve Him with all your hearts. Do you not, as you turn over the pages of your experience, feel your love kindle, my Brethren? I hope you do. And if you do, I know you will serve God, for you cannot love Him without intending, by-and-by, and speedily, to put that love into the form of active service. You will teach better this afternoon in the school. You will do more for God today if you feel these tender thoughts of God exciting in your hearts zealous thoughts towards Him.

Three things I am anxious to say. The first is, if God has thus dealt tenderly with us, we see clearly how truly He loves us. Why does a mother love her child? There are many reasons, but one is this--because she has done so much for it. It is a strange thing, in human nature, that if anybody does you a kindness, you may forget him, and be ungrateful. But if you bestow a kindness on a person, you will love him and remember him. It is not the receiver generally that is certain to give love, it is the giver of kindness who binds himself to the other.

A mother must love her child because she has done so much for it. She has suffered, and she has cared so much that she must love it. The more you have done for a person the better you love him. Now Jesus does not love us because of anything good in us, but today He loves us because He has done so much for us. He has taken the yoke from our necks. He has laid meat unto us. He has drawn us with bands of love, and cords of a man--and having spent so much love on us-- He loves us dearly. Jesus

who suffered so much, is bound to us by new bonds. Calvary is not only the fruit of His love but the root of fresh love.

Another stream of love springs up at the Cross foot. "I," says the Redeemer, "can see My groans and agonies in them." He loves us because He has loved us. This thought ought to cheer us--God has done too much for us to let us perish--

"Can He have taught me To trust in His name, And thus far have brought me To put me to shame?"

Can He have loved me before the world was, and redeemed me with His own Son's life, and yet cast me away? It cannot be--the love of God in times past is a guarantee for the continuance of that love forever and forever.

The second word is this--if God has done all this for us, come, my Brother, what do you think? Will we not try to do more in the future for Him? Shall it be that the Romanist, that the legalist, that those who serve God out of fear, do more than we? Shall they give more than we? Shall they love more than we? Shall they pay more than we? No, if there are any that should love God, we claim to take the first rank. If there are any that may suffer for Him, or that may work for Him, we feel we ought to be in the forefront. If we might make some reserve, and duty did not call, Jesus has loved our souls with love so great that we (if others do not) must give Him all. O let us prove, my Brethren, by our future zeal and consecration, that the motives which God uses, though they are gentle or strong, and though they seem to others to be but frail, yet to us are Omnipotence itself.

The last word is this--all this surely that we have been saying this morning ought to lead those who know not God to desire to know Him. What if His service is conducted not on principles of slavery but of liberty? Will you not take up His yoke? If He takes the bit from the

jaws, if He it is that feeds His children and gives them rest, do you not feel drawn to Him? You who are harnessed to the heavy van of this world's care and toil--will you not ask to have such rest as this? You who, like the laborious bullock, have been plowing to and fro in the furrows of your worldly toil seeking rest but finding none, working as the ox does for others, and scarcely having a morsel of fodder for your own mouth--come unto Jesus and He will give you rest.

Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. O that you would seek Him this day! And if you seek Him He is to be found. He is to be found by the eye of faith that looks out of self to Him. Trust Him--that is the word--and He is yours. God grant you may exercise that trust today, each one of you, and a vision of joy and peace will open before you, the like of which, though a man should tell it to you, you would not conceive to be possible. He that believes in Jesus Christ has life eternal and has Heaven begun. May you have it now for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 27

The Sad Wonder

(No. 935)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He marvelled because of their unbelief." Mark 6:6.

THAT Jesus marvelled was in itself a marvel. We never read that either science or art, Nature or Providence excited His wonder. We do not find that He marvelled at the grandeur of the Temple, although His disciples were evidently wonder-struck, for they said, "Master, see what manner of stones and buildings are here!" Little did His mind dwell upon the gigantic size of the stones, or the antiquity of the pile, or the grandeur of the architecture. But His sympathetic soul mourned as it foresaw the destruction of the whole, and of those who dwelt around it--and He uttered the prophetic words, "There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

I do not find the Redeemer marvelled at the force and majesty of the Roman empire, and yet it wielded a very remarkable power, an all-pervading and irresistible influence. Out of utter insignificance the Roman empire had developed itself into a universal monarchy which locked the entire world in its embrace of iron. Scarcely a dog dared move his tongue without the leave of Caesar. In every place, whether sacred or profane, the insignia of the empire were conspicuous. In every nation, whether polite or barbarous, the tramp of the imperial legionaries was heard. And the eagles of Rome were fluttering on every hill and in every dale.

And yet I do not find that Jesus ever marvelled at all the pomp and

energy of the rule of the Caesars. Neither do I find that He was ever struck with any wonder by the knowledge of the sages and rabbis of His time, or of any other. There were in His days rabbis who, according to the opinion of their fellow countrymen, were renowned beyond all others. So far as rabbinical literature was concerned, our Savior may be said to have lived in an Augustan period, and yet, however profound the doctors of the Law might be, they were very shallow as compared with the Christ of God. No, Jesus never saw any cause in all their wisdom to marvel.

There were but two occasions when our Lord Jesus is recorded to have marvelled at all, and both of these were concerning faith. First, he marvelled at the centurion--"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And on the second occasion, He marvelled at the absence of faith where it might have been expected to be found namely, in His own fellow townsmen--"He marvelled because of their unbelief."

In the case of the centurion, who said that he was not worthy that the Lord should come under his roof, he said he relied upon the potency of the Master's word spoken at any distance to chase out the fever--on the ground that a word from himself was sufficient to command a soldier to obedience--and therefore a command from Christ would call diseases to obedience, too. On the most slender ground comparatively, this Roman, this Gentile, believed in Christ to a very high degree--ascribing to Christ the full power of the Omnipotent God--who says to the forces of Nature, "Do this, and it is done." Jesus, therefore, marvelled that not in all Israel had He found the faith which He had discovered in this Gentile who had comparatively slender opportunity of knowing Him, of hearing His teaching, or of searching into the evidences of His mission as they were contained in the sacred Books.

On the second occasion our Lord marvelled at His fellow townsmen's

unbelief. So you see that in both instances it was faith, or the absence of it, that caused Christ to wonder. Ah, my Brethren, see the importance of faith! Never place that precious Grace in a secondary position. That which can make Jesus marvel! That which seems to Him to be both in its presence and in its absence, a thing to be marvelled at, ought to be a very great point of consideration with us. It should be frequently thought upon, and always estimated at the highest rate. Have you believed? No man ever asked you a weightier question. Are you still in unbelief? No tongue can ever suggest a more solemn enquiry.

Do you believe on the Son of God, or are you yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, wrapped up in your unbelief? O Heart, that shall soon stand before Him that judges both the quick and dead, let this question judge you

this day! Turn not aside from the Judgment Seat of the Gospel, lest you be bound to hear your condemnation from the Judgment Seat of the Law hereafter!

Let us look for a moment or so into what it was, in the particular case of unbelief recorded in this chapter, which so remarkably caused the Savior to marvel. Were not these some of the circumstances? Our Lord had come into the district where He had been brought up and where He was well known. He had come there, no doubt, with the most generous intentions towards His fellow citizens, willing to make their town His headquarters, and to display His miraculous power in acts of beneficence towards all their maimed and sick.

But He was met, on His first public appearance as a preacher at the synagogue, with unbelief. And after awhile was even ejected from the place--and they even attempted to cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill where their city was built. No kindly reception awaited

Him. Cold, stolid unbelief at last turned into cruel, murderous rage.

His wonder must have been this--first, He had come here bringing His disciples with Him, each man of them was a witness to His mission. They were truthful men, and some of them were known in the district. They could all bear witness to the miracles which He had worked, to the holiness of His life, to the power of His prayers.

He brings these witnesses with Him, and yet they enquire not at their hands as candid men should do, but under the influence of an unworthy prejudice they condemn the Savior and deny His claims. He was one of themselves, they said, and how could He be the Messiah? Thus did they seem to plead guilty to the opprobrious Proverb, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Our Lord's teaching appears to have struck them--they were astonished at it. And more, "they all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22), and yet they did not believe!

Their attention was evidently awakened and their astonishment was aroused. But yet merely because they happened to know Him, and because He preached the Gospel too boldly, they allowed their prejudice first to raise the question, "Is not this a carpenter, the son of Mary?" And next they rejected Him altogether. They went even further than being struck with His teaching, for they acknowledged that He had worked bona fide miracles. They said one to the other, "What wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are worked by His hands?" They did not question the truth of His miracles, they owned them to be mighty works.

These miracles should surely have proved something, and should at least have shielded the Worker from the influence of unreasoning prejudice. And yet they overlooked the overwhelming evidence of His Divine works, attested as they were by His disciples, and even acknowledged by themselves. They virtually asked, "How can this be the Christ of God,

seeing He is one of our countrymen, and His mother, and His brothers and sisters are all with us?"--a reason which was, indeed, no reason, but a disgrace to themselves, and an ignominious witness to their own infamy.

I have said that prejudice against the Lord Jesus, because He dwelt in His youth at Nazareth, and had been brought up among them, was very unreasonable. But it was the more so, because that very fact gave them opportunities for knowing who and what He was. If they knew Mary His mother, why did they not learn His pedigree? They might with but little trouble have discovered that Mary was of the race and lineage of David. They might have found, if they had asked the question, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem. They might readily have learned from His mother those circumstances which were vivid in her recollection, for we are told that she kept them and pondered them in her heart.

They might have heard of the midnight song of the angels, of the visits of the shepherds, of the adoration of the wise men, of the dream of His reputed father, of the flight into Egypt, and all the other remarkable circumstances which went to corroborate the testimony that Jesus was born King of the Jews. They were just in the right place to find evidence if they had cared for it. But no, with the candle before them they shut their eyes, or, rather, in broad noonday they groped for the wall like blind men, because they were resolved not to see. What if Jesus had been brought up at Nazareth? What but prejudice could urge that against Him? Was it not an honor to themselves? He must be brought up somewhere, and being brought up there, they had all the better opportunities for knowing Him.

They might have known, and must have known something of His holy Childhood, of that remarkable excellence of disposition, of His being found in the Temple, of His growth in wisdom and in favor with God and

man, and of the prophecies of Simeon and of Anna concerning Him. Surely some of there matters were talked of by the well, or at the city gates! Certainly, we may be sure that as the early history of a young man is generally known in the village from which he
sets out in life, it must have been known in Nazareth, and have been spoken of in many a social gathering, that John the Baptist had declared the Son of Mary to be "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

Surely Nazareth must have become the very focus of His fame, and the people there must have been placed in a position eminently advantageous for coming to a correct conclusion with regard to His Person and His office. For all these things to be set aside simply because of a silly prejudice arising from His being brought up among them was such a folly that Christ might well marvel. When all this while they were losing the incalculably precious blessings of healing, and when they were bringing upon themselves the curse of having put from them the kingdom of God merely for an idle prejudice, it was enough to make the Christ of God wonder at their unbelief.

I shall say nothing more about these Nazarites, but shall pass on to remark that the unbelief of many here present is equally marvelous in some respects. I am afraid that most of us will come under censure. First I shall address myself to those who are saved, who have felt the power of the Holy Spirit within them renewing their natures. And then, secondly, I shall speak to you who are hearers of the Gospel, who, nevertheless, have not believed to the salvation of your souls.

I. I shall speak to THE PEOPLE OF GOD, and I am afraid while I speak, there will be few of us who will be able to plead guiltless. Jesus assuredly marvels because of our unbelief--He marvels at the unbelief of His own people. Let me show first the wonderful forms of unbelief

that are found among the professed people of God. Yes, and among the real people of God. At times we doubt the wisdom of Providence. We hold as a cardinal truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." And yet when the circumstances of our position are dark, and our load of trouble is unusually heavy, the suggestion will arise, "Is this wise? Is this kind? Will this promote my good? Can it be that circumstances so unpropitious shall be overruled for my benefit?" There may be those who have never doubted this Truth of God, even when exposed to the most rigorous tribulation. But I am afraid the most of us have foolishly asked the question, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? If it is so, why am I thus? Has He turned to be my enemy, seeing He deals thus roughly with me?"

Methinks this is one of the wonders of unbelief. After the many occasions in which God has proved to us His faithfulness, after the many times in which, with some of us especially, God has overruled our afflictions for our present and eternal benefit, it is of all unbelief one of the most marvelous that we should not be able to trust in the Providence of God. Another strange form of unbelief is mistrust of the Divine faithfulness. We have the written promise of God that He will never leave nor forsake those who trust Him. We have His guarantee that in His service "as our days so shall our strength be." We know beyond question that we never have temptations capable of making us fall away, but have the Divine assurance, "My Grace is sufficient for you."

And yet there are times when, if we are put to some little stress of labor beyond what is usual, or visible means are straitened, our spirits sink! We become depressed, and the demon of unbelief suggests that now our defeat is certain, and the enemy will triumph over us. "Aha," says he, "where is your God now? Will He stand by you now? Will

He enable you to be victorious in this terrible strife?"

Happy is that man who can go about his Master's work as sure that God is with him as though he heard the wings of angels over his head and saw the eternal arm working visibly on his behalf. Happy is that man, but, alas, we are not always thus happy! We doubt because the flesh is weak, and unbelief enquires, "Will He make a table in the wilderness? Will He command the rocks to gush with water? If the Lord should open the windows of Heaven could such a thing be?"

Yet, Brethren, after what we have seen, and after all that our fathers have seen, after what we have experienced in deliverances, in protections, in supplies, in upholding and in restorations, the Lord of Love may well marvel because of our unbelief! When we stoop to mistrust the faithfulness of God, who cannot lie, and think that the everlasting God that faints not, neither is weary, of whose understanding there is no searching--can fail to keep His Word and fulfill His Covenant--this is unbelief, indeed!

Another very remarkable form of unbelief among God's people is with regard to the efficacy of prayer. If there is anything under Heaven that I am as sure of as I am of the demonstrations of mathematics, it is the fact that God hears prayer. Answers to prayer have come to some of us, not now and then on rare occasions, so that after a series of years we have a few facts to collate--but they come to us as ordinary circumstances of everyday life. God has heard for us prayers about great things and prayers about little things--prayers about things that we could reveal to others, and prayers

about secret matters in which none could join us. We have had so many answers to prayer that the fact is far beyond any further question with us.

And yet there may be a matter pressing upon our heart for God's glory,

and it may be a subject about which we could plead a precise promise, such as this--"If two of you are agreed as touching anything concerning My kingdom, it shall be done unto you," and yet we are half afraid that our prayer will not be heard--the husband afraid that the conversion of his wife will never occur! The wife fearful that that swearing husband of hers will not, after all, yield to the importunate entreaties which she has addressed to Heaven! A teacher in a Sunday school class still afraid that his children, though often prayed for, will not be converted!

We have many prayers, but how little faith is mingled with them! Well, it is strange, it is passing strange, it is amazing, when we have already been heard ninety-nine times that we cannot trust God the hundredth time! And when our whole life is as full of answers to prayer as it is of hours, it is strange that we should go tremblingly to the Mercy Seat and scarcely think that God will grant our desire again. No wonder if Jesus should marvel at the unbelief of many of His people's prayers! To kneel at the Mercy Seat where the blood of God's own Son is sprinkled--where Christ Himself stands as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession--and to fear that when we plead for His sake we yet may not be heard! It is a miracle of incredulity!

Another singular form of unbelief is this--a doubt as to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I know that this is commonly creeping over the Christian Church. The Gospel of Jesus Christ will not, according to some, be found to succeed in this enlightened age, or among enlightened nations. It may be very effectual among South Sea Islanders with their dense ignorance. It may perhaps civilize degraded Bushmen in their kraals. But to refined, intellectual men like the Hindus, the Gospel avails nothing. Yes, and the fear of this has perhaps been up to now a great hindrance to the success of the Gospel because our unbelief has

restrained the hand of Christ, the Holy Spirit has been grieved, and mighty works have been few.

But I will not talk of nations, and of this truth on a broad scale, I will bring it home to you. My Brethren, have you not sometimes held your tongue concerning the Gospel of Jesus when you have met with very wicked persons? "No," you have said, "there is no hope there." Or you have been called to visit some sick man of profane life, and you have said, "There is no hope here." Or you have stumbled across some abandoned woman, and have not thought of preaching Christ to her, for you have said, "This is a case beyond the reach of the Word."

But it is not so. I will prove it is not so. Has the Gospel saved you, my Brother? And you, Sister? Then whom can it not save? Ever since the day when I came as a burdened, desponding sinner to my Master's feet, and felt my load roll off me at the sight of His dear wounds. Ever since I saw Him as the Substitute bearing the wrath of God on my behalf, I have despaired of none--nor would I if they were at the very gates of Hell. For could we get the Gospel to their ears, and the Spirit of God to their hearts, they would be saved. May God grant that we may not doubt the power of the Gospel.

So, too, in hours of great distress we have known true Christians doubtful of the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. They would not confess such unbelief, but it comes to that. They have said, "I thought I was, indeed, one of His. I went up with the multitude that kept holy day, and gladsome were my songs, but I have turned aside. I have backslidden, I have lost the joy of my Lord, and for me there is no hope." We bid such persons look to the Redeemer anew, and we say, "There is still power in the Atonement to take away all sin, for 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.' "

For awhile, these desponding ones will say, "Alas, I cannot find peace,

I cannot get comfort. My sin is gone over my head as a heavy burden, and, as David said, my wounds stink and are corrupt, there is no healing for my sores. I thought I was a child of God, but I am driven from His Presence, and I shall know no hope." But, Brothers and Sisters, it is not so. While the Bible remains true, it becomes none of us ever to think that we can be beyond the reach of mercy. Jesus Christ came into the world not to save good people, but to save sinners, even the very chief. He did not come to save the virtuous, but "to seek and to save that which was lost." "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Our sickness and our poverty, our ruin and our destruction are proper pleas with the Christ of God. There shall never come a day when His precious blood shall lose its power--

"Till all the ransomed Church of God Are sa ved to sin no more,"

there shall still be efficacy in the fountain for cleansing, still be power in Jesus to blot out iniquity.

I might go on and mention some other forms of this unbelief, but I will not--we will rather consider why they are so amazing. First, it is very amazing in saints of God to be disbelieving because of their relationship to the Father and to the Lord Jesus. To doubt a stranger is not at all an extraordinary thing, but for a child to doubt its father--for a brother to doubt a tender, truthful, loving brother. For a bride to doubt the bridegroom who has made her blessed-- these things are strange. And for me, for you, for any blood-washed soul to doubt your Father God, to mistrust your elder Brother Jesus, to have suspicions of the Bridegroom of your hearts, even Jesus, the Well-Beloved of Heaven and earth--well may we marvel, and mingle sadness with the marvel! And well may you marvel, and mingle bitter penitence with your wonder.

Why do I mistrust my Lord? He has never lied unto me. Blessed be His

name, He can forgive even this sin. But it must wound Him sorely. It must be another crucifixion to Him, that those who are saved by Him should yet doubt Him. Forgive us, Jesus, and help us against this sin in the future.

Our unbelief is a marvel, again, because the rightness of trust in God and in His Son Jesus Christ are backed up by such wonderful historical facts. None have ever trusted in Him and been confounded. The Jews of old could look back to a very memorable history, full of great wonders of faith. And so when they doubted God, they doubted Him against all the facts that stood in evidence. When the Lord brought them up out of the Red Sea, and made the waters stand upright as a heap. When He led their enemies down into the heart of the sea, where they were utterly destroyed by the embracing waters. When Israel sang a new song unto the Lord, and triumphed gloriously, was not it an amazing thing that within a few days they should ask, "Can He give us bread to eat?"

And when after that they saw the manna lying around their tents, and drank of the rock that followed them, and marked the cloudy pillar that shaded them by day, and the fiery pillar that cheered and enlightened them by night--was it not strange that they should doubt whether He could bring them into Canaan, and drive out the giants with their chariots of iron? Israel's doubts were very strange, but so are ours.

For we doubt not only in the teeth of all Bible history, but in defiance of the history of the saints ever since Apostolic times--the history of our own sires, and of ourselves.

Did the Lord fail his saints at Smithfield, when they sang as they burned? Was He not the helper of those who, but yesterday, in Madagascar, went forth to die for Jesus, with hymns of triumph on their tongues? Did not the Lord help the covenanting fathers of His saints in Scotland? And was He not the guardian of our persecuted sires in this

priest-ridden land? Let us then yield to multiplied evidences the credence they deserve, and let us trust a faithful God as He should be trusted.

But we have, in addition to the history of the past, the personal experience of the present. I used to marvel at William Huntingdon's, "Bank of Faith"--a strange enough book, by the way--but I am sure I could, from my own history, write a far more remarkable, "Bank of Faith," than William Huntingdon has penned. And I question whether the life of any Christian here, with its little details of deliverance, of assistance, of answers to prayer, would not be very remarkable if it could be written. At any rate, you and I have had most singular proofs in our experience of the truth, goodness, faithfulness, and power of God and of His Christ.

We do not speak merely what we believe, but what we know, and testify what we have seen. I have often said that if anyone wants to dispute with me about the evidences of Christianity, the mere outworks, I might perhaps yield the day. Perhaps I might not be inclined to accept the gauge of battle--for I care comparatively little about the outworks.

But if any man will attack the real inwards of Christianity (which few ever do, because they do not know much about them), then the feeblest man among us will hold the wall against all comers.

We have certain experiences--communion with the Christ of God, communion with our Father, manifestations of His face to us which we shall not publish in the street, nor cast before swine--but which, nevertheless, we would dare bring forward as witnesses, powerful to ourselves, at any rate, and to others who can understand them. Strange enough, however, is the fact that after all our inward evidence and indisputable personal proof, we do, nevertheless, doubt in dark times, and scandalously mistrust. After what our Lord has done for us, He may

well marvel at our wicked, unreasonable unbelief.

And there is another reason for wonder which I shall mention, namely this, that our unbelief is singular when we consider our own beliefs. You do not doubt the inspiration of Scripture, you Christian people, yet you doubt the Truth of something in Scripture. You do not doubt the Deity of Christ, yet you doubt whether Christ will be true to you. You do not doubt that His Gospel comes from Heaven, yet sometimes you doubt whether it will exert a conquering power among the sons of men. You do not doubt the promise, nor doubt the Lord, so you say, and yet you doubt whether that promise will be fulfilled to you.

Too often your faith is a theory, and your unbelief a fact. O that our faith might be a fact, and a practical fact, too, commonly carried out in all the transactions of life! At home and abroad, in joy and in sorrow, may we still be unstag-gering Believers holding fast by the Truth of God, by the certainty of His promise, the infallibility of His purpose, the glory of His Gospel, the Deity of His Son and the triumph of His Word. I close this address to you who are His people by remarking that as you see what forms unbelief takes, it will be well to confess your sin with sorrow. And as you have seen how marvelous it is, it will be right to be ashamed that you should sin so strangely.

Before I have done, notice that your sin is so amazing that it makes Jesus Christ, Himself, marvel. He is used to wonders--He is Himself the Wonderful, the great Wonderworker, and yet He marvels because of our unbelief! We often wonder at the unbelief of the Jews, that they should have seen so much of God in the wilderness, and yet should doubt Him. As in a glass behold yourselves. I have sometimes wondered at the unbelief of others--I have put my soul in their place, and have said, "I never could be disbelieving if I had such an experience as theirs."

Ah, why could I judge others while myself guilty? No doubt these doubters think much the same of us, and think us inexcusable when we are desponding. There are times when we wonder at our own unbelief! When God has brought us safely through a trial, we have said, "I cannot think how I could mistrust Him." And in the surprising joy of some remarkable mercies, we have looked back with blushes and with tears, and said, "Have mercy upon me, O my God, for my unbelief, for I can never doubt You again." Yes, it is very amazing, it is very strange that we should be so basely incredulous. May God lift us out of this unbelief, and make us to hold fast His Word, and trust in Him without ceasing.

II. I shall now want your earnest attention, You WHO ARE NOT YET CONVERTED, while I try affectionately to speak with you concerning your unbelief.

Among the hearers who continually frequent this place there are a great number who were never infidel in the common sense of the term. And though they would be very grieved even to approach to that state--they are nevertheless infidel in another sense--they are unbelieving as to any saving trust in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Now I desire to speak to your hearts this morning. Your unbelief is very marvelous, and in each form that it takes it is so!

Perhaps you fear that your sin is too great for mercy. You profess to believe God's Word? "Yes." And yet you dare talk in that way, when it is written, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "Ah, no!" you say, "that is not the form of my unbelief--I am not in a fit state for the reception of Divine Grace." And you believe God's Word, do you? You believe the Gospel which I have preached to you so often, and yet dare say that?

Do you not know that your very unfitness is your fitness? "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." You know very well that salvation is all of Grace, that from first to last it is all of pure mercy and yet you talk about being unfit to come! I think I have heard you sing, some of you--

"If we tarry till we're better, We shall never come at all."

You know that, and that your present state is the very best state in which you could come, and yet you dare disbelieve in such a way! Shame on you! Shame on you!

But perhaps you say, "No, my doubts are of another kind. I am afraid mine is an excluded case." And yet after reading the Word of God you cannot find a single text to prove that. And you are told that there are no occult texts that do it, for God has not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth, saying to the seed of Jacob, Seek you My face in vain. You know the promises. For instance, you know this--"Whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely." "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters." You are not ignorant of that text, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

You know how broad and unlimited those promises are made, and yet you dare to talk of your being excluded! Did you not sing the other Sunday, when I gave out the verse--

"None are excluded therefore but those Who do themselves exclude. Welcome the learned and polite, The ignorant and rude. While Grace does not forget the prince, The poor may take their share, No mortal has a just pretense To perish in despair."

I will say that over again--

"No mortal has a just pretense To perish in despair."

The reason for despair is a mere pretense, and an unjust one. The

Gospel of Jesus Christ has with a sound of trumpet declared that if you have no goodness Christ Jesus will give you the goodness! That if you have no fitness you need no fitness! That you may come just as you are and rely upon the unsurpassed and unbounded mercy of the God that made the heavens and the earth--who has Himself set forth Jesus Christ to be a Propitiation for sin--in Whom, if you put your trust, you shall find instant pardon and eternal salvation, a change of heart and a renewed life!

Such unbelief as these--I will not mention more, because they are all alike, a pack of rubbish to be thrown out at once--are all marvelous!

It is amazing that they should be indulged in by people who hear the Gospel. In your case, my dear Hearers, they are more than ordinarily marvelous for this reason--because you already admit so much. If you did not believe in the Bible I could not talk so to you. If you did not believe Christ to be the Son of God I should not so much marvel at your unbelief.

If you rejected all the testimony about the precious blood of the Mediator, I could understand your being unbelieving. But there are some of you who know that Christ is God. You know He is able to save from sin. You know He is able to save YOU, and yet you are unsaved. And I marvel at your unbelief because you confess that it leaves you in a state of ruin and will land you in a state of everlasting confusion!

You know you are filthy, and that the fountain is open--why, then, do you not wash? You know Christ will save you if you trust Him. You know He is worthy of your trust. O Sirs, why do you not trust Him? In the name of everything that is reasonable, why not trust Him? God grant you may.

Your unbelief is the more amazing because the cause from which it arises is so inexcusable. With some of you your unbelief is the effect

of inconsiderateness. You do not think about it. You believe, but believe superficially. You do not weigh and judge. Oh, is it so? Will you ruin your own souls for want of thought? You look, as I gaze upon you, to be men and women of intelligence. And can you, with intelligence and education, trifle with your souls? Eternity, eternity, eternity! You know its meaning, and yet can you trifle with it?

You are immortal, no flame shall ever devour your soul. You shall outlast the sun, and when the moon has waned for the last time, you still shall live. And will you dare to tempt God's anger so as to live forever beneath His frown? When a simple trust in Jesus will secure for you a happy immortality--shall you through carelessness suffer your soul to drift down the stream to the dark ocean of despair?

With some of you it is little more than mere whim which your depraved heart pleads as a reason for keeping from Christ. Either it is the pride which will not let you take salvation gratis, or some prejudice against the preacher, or against a doctrine of the Word, or a wish for you scarcely know what--maybe of some sign or wonder. Alas, men are fools when they are wicked! Wickedness and folly are but synonymous terms. And for you who profess to believe so much to decline practically to carry it out is a folly which even the lunatics of Bedlam could not rival. O that you were wise and would consider this!

I marvel at the unbelief of some of you because it causes you so much grief. It is many months since you had a day of real happiness, some of you. Your conscience is so much awakened that you cannot be quiet, and yet there is rest, rest to be had, and you have it not. There is the cup before you, and you are thirsty, yet you refuse to drink! There is the bread, and you are hungry, but you will not eat! I marvel at your unbelief, and the more because you have seen others saved. Since you were first impressed your daughter has found peace, your son is

rejoicing in Christ, the friend who sits next to you in the pew has been long ago with his feet on the Rock, and a new song in his mouth--and he has told you it is all through his trusting Jesus--and yet you will not trust, too.

O may God teach you to be reasonable, and cure you of this folly! May His Holy Spirit work wisdom of faith in you. It is marvelous that all this while you would be ashamed to avow that you doubt anything that God has said. You make God a liar, but would dread to say so. You would not be called an infidel, and yet what better is an unbeliever? For if a man believes and does not act on what he believes, is he not, if his soul is ruined, even more without excuse than he who had some mental difficulty to plead as a ground of unbelief?

My dear Friends, some of you who have been sitting here for years and yet do not believe--you are marvels to me! Count you that little? You are marvels to many in your family who long since expected to see you on the Lord's side. You are a wonder to devils--even they cannot make it out--the power of their spells has amazed even them! You are a wonder to the damned in Hell--with what welcome alacrity would they avail themselves of an opportunity to escape from misery, and yet you trifle with such opportunities!

You are a marvel to the angels who would have rejoiced over you if you had returned to your Father, and who wonder that you stand at the Cross's foot from Sunday to Sunday and yet doubt the power of Him who bled on it! You are marvels to the Lord Himself. One of these days, unless you repent, you will be a wonder to yourselves, for this text will come true to you if God prevents it not. "Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish." But I hope better things of you, even things which accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Before the

Redeemer was taken up and ascended to His Throne, He left this message to us, His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." Believe and be baptized, and God grant you His salvation for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 28

A Blessed Wonder

(No. 936)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 12, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Matthew 8:10.

You remember that we commenced this morning's sermon by observing that Jesus is not reported to have marvelled either at the gigantic architecture of the Temple, or at the wonderful discipline of the Roman army, or at the profound knowledge of the rabbis. He only wondered twice, according to the record, and on both of those occasions he marvelled concerning faith--once at the absence of it, and once at its presence.

In the case which we spoke of this morning, He marvelled at the unbelief of His fellow townsmen. In the narrative before us, He marvelled at the faith of the centurion. From this we learn that we ought not to be so engrossed with the wonders of science and of art, or even with the wonders of creation and of Providence, as to become indifferent to the marvels of Divine Grace. These should occupy the very highest place in our estimation. The seven wonders of the world are nothing when compared with the countless wonders of Grace.

That man must be foolish who does not admire the works of God in Nature. He is frivolous who does not trace with awe the hand of God in history. And he is even more unwise who despises the masterpieces of Divine skill and wisdom which are to be seen in the empire of Divine

Grace. In the kingdom of God the wise man only wonders once in his life, but that is always--fools think not so, but they are void of understanding. The museum of Grace is richer than that of Nature. A heart broken on account of sin is a far greater wonder than the rarest fossil, whatever it may tell of ancient floods of the sea or convulsions of the land.

An eye that glistens with the tears of penitence is a greater marvel than the falls of Niagara, or the fountains of the Nile. Faith that humbly links itself to Christ has in it as great a beauty as the rainbow, and the confidence which looks alone to Jesus, and so irradiates the soul, is as much an object for admiration as is the sun when he shines in his strength. Talk not of the pyramids, the Colossus, the golden house of Nero, or the temple of Ephesus--for the living temple of God's Church is fairer far. Let others glory in the marvels they have seen, but it is mine to say unto my Lord, "I will praise You, for you have done wonderful things. Your love to me was wonderful. Surely I will remember Your wonders of old."

Consider well the work of God within the human heart. Consider well the faith which lies at the beginning and foundation of spiritual life, and you will have as good cause for wonder as the Savior had when He marvelled at the centurion's faith. The peculiar point for admiration may not be the same, but all faith has in it admirable elements, and like its Divine Author, may be called "wonderful."

I shall speak upon what there was that was so remarkable in the centurion's faith, making practical remarks in a kind of running comment as we pass along. And then if there should be any fragments that remain to be gathered up, we shall try again to apply them in the same style of personal application.

I. What was there, then, about the centurion's faith so remarkable that

Christ wondered at it? Methinks the first point was THAT THERE WAS SUCH FAITH FOUND IN SUCH A PERSON. The Lord seemed to imply this when He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." As if He might have expected to find it in Israel, among an instructed people, among a people to whom the oracles had been committed--but He could not have expected to find it in a Gentile, in a Roman, in a soldier--in one who was apparently an unlikely subject for spiritual influences.

From this I gather that the most astonishing and acceptable faith may be exercised by the most unlikely persons. Here was a Gentile believing, a Gentile believing far better than one of the seed of Israel. Rich Grace thus brought the far-off one into the full blessing of the kingdom. Here was a soldier believing, a Roman soldier believing in the Lord!

Roman soldiers in Judea were not as our armies are--a guard protecting their native hearths and homes. They were the servants of tyrants, treading down the liberties of the Jewish people, and obnoxious, of course, in the highest degree to the Jews.

And yet for all that, though the soldier's trade in those days was oppression, and his wages were plunder--here was a soldier believing in Jesus Christ! And, to increase the wonder, this believing legionary was not a common soldier merely, but one who occupied a position of responsibility, bringing to him no small degree of honor and of respect. Alas, the honors of this world are seldom helpful to belief. When a man receives honor of men, he too often finds it impossible to receive the Gospel as a little child. All these things met in the centurion, and yet he was not only a Believer, but a surpassing Believer, even to a marvel, so that Christ wondered at his faith!

My dear Friend, though you should happen to be in the most unlikely circumstances of body and of mind for you to be converted and to become

a Christian, yet I see not what hinders your being so converted if the Lord blesses the Word. If you have been brought up altogether apart from the influences of religion, yet remember, so also was this centurion, and he became a master Believer. Why should not you? Though the ground of your heart has as yet never been tilled and remains like the virgin soil of the primeval forest, yet my Lord may get a gracious crop out of your heart not many days after the tillage of the Law and the sowing of the Gospel shall have been tried upon you! For by His gracious touch He can turn a barren heath into a fruitful field.

Though you feel tonight as waste as the moorland, yet you need not despair. Though now dewless as Gilboa, He can water you as plenteously as Hermon itself. The barren woman shall yet keep house, and the desolate shall rejoice in her children. Nature's death may yet yield to the Spirit's life.

Perhaps you follow a calling which is supposed to be inimical to religion, but even then, despair not. Why should not the Master call you by His Grace, and constrain you to leave the calling, as Matthew left the receipt of custom? Or else through the power of Grace within you, enable you to exercise your calling without sin? You have, perhaps, never read the Bible--why should you not begin now? It is possible that you have been a disbeliever in it, yet there are such arguments in its favor--I am not about to trouble you with them just now--but there are among them living arguments which may convince you before you are quite aware that your prejudice is being removed.

Some of us have tasted and handled of the Word of Life, and are witnesses of the power which comes with the Gospel. We are, ourselves, living witnesses of what it can do in breathing peace into the soul, and in putting sin away! And I see not why you also should not prove it and rejoice in it. Yes, and even distance others in the race of Grace.

That tinker playing cat on Sunday, on Elstow Green, did not look a likely man to write the Pilgrim's Progress, and yet John Bunyan did it. That blaspheming sailor cast ashore on a slave-trade settlement on the coast of Africa, and there made a slave himself, did not look as though he would become a minister of evangelical godliness, whose name should be sweet and full of savor to after generations, and yet such was John Newton!

There is no reason, because of the darkness of the past, why the future should not be bright, for there is One who can blot out sin and pass by transgression and iniquity. However hostile your nature may be to the Gospel and to spiritual Truth, there is power in Jesus Christ to change that nature, and to cause you, the most unlikely person, to become a leader in His camp--a mighty trophy of His Sovereign Grace. Is it not written, "I was found of them that sought Me not. I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me"? "I will call them My people, which were not My people. And her Beloved, which was not Beloved"?

Surely angels rejoiced when they heard the Roman legionary say, "Speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." Surely the disciples, as they clustered around the Master, said one to another, "What strange work of Grace is this, that this soldier should stand here and speak better than any of us concerning the Truth and the power of the Lord Jesus!" I do pray to see some in this place become equally remarkable trophies of Christ's power! I do expect to see throughout this, our country, the most unlikely persons converted. The great trumpet shall be blown and great sinners shall find that the day of their redemption has come. From the east and from the west, the far-off ones shall gather to the feast of love, while the astonished Church shall cry, "These, where have they been?"

The Church could not have thought that Saul of Tarsus who once

persecuted the Church would have become her chief Apostle, and yet so it was! And so it shall be still while the King sits on His Throne. He will yet come down again and take out of the ranks of the enemy the stoutest hearted men, and make them bow their knees before His majesty, and afterwards He will enlist them beneath His own standard, and send them forth conquering and to conquer.

The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Grace shall yet more abound where sin abounded. As in the present case, the marvel of Grace shall be the more memorable because of the singularity of the person enjoying it. May God make YOU such a person, and such a wonder, too!

II. The next point concerning which our Lord may have marvelled was THE SUBJECT OF THE CENTURION'S CONFIDENCE. He had a servant who was struck with palsy. This was a disease which, at that time at any rate, if not at present, was reckoned to be utterly incurable. In the case of this servant the disease was of the most aggravated kind, for he was "grievously tormented." The strength of his constitution battling with the paralysis caused an unusual agony.

It had come to a climax, for he was at the point of death. Though a cure of the palsy had never been heard of, and was a most astounding miracle if ever worked, this man believed that Christ could heal the palsy and could at once restore his servant to perfect health. Yes, here was a faith which took an impossibility into its hand and threw it aside--faith which knew that all things were possible with an Omnipotent Savior--faith which saw in Christ that Omnipotent Savior, and therefore raised no question as to His ability or willingness.

Dear Hearers, this is the kind of faith I would that we all exercised. I will suppose, dear Friend, that tonight your case, your sinful case,

is like that of the centurion's servant's physical case. You believe your sin to be incurable, that is to say, unpardonable. You think, also, that if it were pardoned as to the past, yet you would be sure to go back to it again, as a dog returns to his vomit. You therefore look upon your case as being an utterly hopeless one. O not so! Not so! He who can heal the drunkenness that lies in one, or the tendency to lust that lurks in another, can cast out any and every sort of sin, and cast it out with a word.

There is no transgression too black for His blood to wash out the stain, and there is no propensity to sin too strong for His Spirit to control and at last destroy. Cures of all cases of spiritual disease are possible with Him. The blackest sinner may yet become the brightest saint. At the gates of Hell you may sit tonight in your moral filthiness, and yet not only at the gates of Heaven may you yet stand in the brightness of holiness, but within those gates you may yet be enclosed in the perfection of spotlessness with all the rest who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

The centurion's faith was this--he believed that there were no impossibilities with Christ--and he left his palsied servant in those gracious and mighty hands. And, my Friend, your faith, if it is to save you, must do the same. It must take your case at its worst, and yet believe that Christ can save even to the uttermost. Your sin has been aggravated-- confess it! Your sin is in its own self unpardonable--Justice writes it with a pen of iron--and no tears of repentance or endeavors after reformation can blot it out. Only Sovereign Grace, fresh from the altar of atoning sacrifice, can make an end of sin. Confess all this!

You are far gone from hope--confess it! Your natural estate is perilous, no, deadly--confess it! Make out your case to be as bad as

you can conceive it to be--it is so--and when you have done so, say, "But for all that, I believe that God in Christ Jesus can forgive me, and I rest my guilty soul at the foot of the Cross where expiation was made for sin. I believe that Jesus there put my guilt away, and thus I have peace with God." If you believe that you are a little sinner, and that therefore, because of the moderate degree of your guilt, Christ can save you, you know nothing about it. But if knowing your sin to be great, heinous, aggravated, damnable--and you can still come to Jesus--you do glorify His name.

If you do avow yourself to be the chief of sinners, and yet do believe that He can save you, and rely upon Him to do it, you have a marvelous faith--a faith that will bring you to Heaven. Not to forget the guilt of our sin, and then trust Jesus--but to remember our sin with more shame and grief than ever, and yet to trust in the cleansing blood of Jesus-- this is faith, this is the wonder of the skies! Be of good cheer, O Sinner, if all your reliance leans on the Mediator. In spite of ten thousand times ten thousand accusing sins, you are a saved man! O that others like you would place their dependence upon the same sin-forgiving Savior!

May the Eternal Spirit draw them now to Jesus, and give them immediate salvation by precious faith in a precious Christ. Faith is the vital point, the one necessary matter--may it be worked in you now. Faith can soon remove the diffi-

culties which stand in your path, and make you a straight road to Glory, for it is a wonder-worker, and all things are possible to it--

"It says to the mountains, Depart, That stand between God and the soul. It binds up the broken in heart, And makes wounded consciences whole. Bids sins of a crimson-like dye Be spotless as snow, and as white, And makes such a sinner as I As pure as an angel of light.'"

III. Thirdly, another wonder was THE ENERGY OF THIS MAN'S FAITH WHICH LED HIM TO DEAL WITH THE CASE IN SUCH A BUSINESS-LIKE WAY. Alas, alas, the hackneyed form which most men's religion assumes!

They take it up at second-hand, or they cut and shape it after somebody else's fashion. Not so this man. I do not know that he had ever had a religious acquaintance, but falling in probably with some of the books of Scripture, he read them, and he discovered that Jesus Christ was what He professed to be--the Son of God and the Savior of men.

Having come to this conclusion, he at once trusted in Him as a matter of fact, not as a matter of profession. And having trusted in the Savior, he acted upon the trust in a business-like common-sense manner.

He sat down and he considered with himself thus--"I am a captain. I say to a soldier, Go, and he goes. I say to another, Come--he comes. I appoint my servant who waits upon me to do certain business, and he does it. Now, this Jesus Christ is a far greater commander than I am. All the powers of nature must therefore be under His check and control. He will only have to say a thing, and it will be done.

"If He were to bid the heavens be clothed in blackness, they would don the sackcloth, and if He were to command the clouds to disappear, and the sun to shine or to stand still, the obedient sun would know its Master, and yield a willing homage to Him." The centurion, according to the best rules of argument, was led to this conclusion--and his practical mind made immediate use of the inference. That Jesus can accomplish His will with a word is only what you and I ought also to infer from His nature and office, and that He is ready to exercise that power is clear from His Character and His promises.

"Well, then," said the centurion, "I have but to go and ask Him, and if His heart is moved with my piteous story, He will only have to say it in one single word, and, bad as my servant's case is, he will be cured

at once, and I shall be the happy master of a healthy servant." Now, that was fine reasoning. That was treating fact as fact, and not as we too often do, as if it were pious fiction. This godly soldier was no mere theorist, no superficial holder of an unpractical creed, but a doer of the Word, a genuine matter-of-fact Believer in what he held to be true.

Now, I do pray that each one here may be able to treat the Gospel as a matter of business. Treat it as a matter of fact, and may none of you trifle and toy with it, nor think it to be a mere subtlety for the consideration for theologians, a theme of dispute for theorists and men who merely think and talk. I pray you make the one thing necessary the first and true business of your lives. If anything is real, surely eternal salvation must be. Your condition before God is not a subject for cloudland. It belongs to the common-sense, practical, everyday, life-business of men.

See, now, how it stands. You have broken God's Law. You are guilty. God must punish you. Eternal Justice demands it. But the Lord Jesus came into the world to provide a way by which, without dishonor to God's Justice, sin may be forgiven. That way was Substitution. Christ stood in the sinner's place, was punished with the sinner's punishment, and bore the wrath of God for sinners. But for what sinners? For all sinners? No, but for such as will trust Him. I, then, being guilty, come and trust Him. I see good reason to do so. He is God, and He was appointed by God to be a Propitiation for sin.

What God appoints, and God delights in, I may truthfully and confidently accept. I do accept Him. I do now trust my soul with Jesus. Then I am saved. My sin has gone. My iniquity has ceased to be. I am a saved soul. Come and reason thus with yourself. Oh, I pray the Holy Spirit to help you to do so. Let this be the subject of your soliloquy,

"If I were Omnipotent, as Christ is, it would be as easy for me to move a mountain as a mole hill. And therefore is it as easy for Him to take away my great sins as another's little sins. If there is a universal cleansing fluid, it will take out great spots as well as little spots, and therefore the blood of Christ can wash out my great sins as well as the lesser sins of other people.

"One stroke of the hand, and the bill is receipted. It is as easy to write a receipt for a bill of fifty thousand pounds as for a bill for ten pence. So if Jesus Christ, who has already paid Believers' debts, calls me pardoned and absolved, it is done. He has the power to do it, and I rely upon the merit of His atoning blood." O that you would now do so! And I will add, O that you would do so now! These Sundays, how they are flying! Your time, how it is passing away, and with your time your opportunities for finding mercy!

It does not seem long ago since we were in the depth of winter, and now we are getting near the longest day in summer, and soon the wings of time will bear us again into months of frost and snow. How long halt you between two opinions? Are these delays to continue forever? Will you always go on hearing about these things, but never attending to them? I do pray you by the flight of time, by the certainty of death to each of you, and your ignorance of its appointed hour--seek the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near. Lay hold of eternal life. And, like the centurion, come and put your trust in Jesus to save you. And though your faith will be marvelous, yet the honor shall be all to Him, and the glory to His blessed name.

IV. I will pass on. Another point of wonder in the centurion's faith was THAT HE DID NOT ASK FOR A SIGN. Many of the great ones of old, when God was about to fulfill a promise, needed to be strengthened for service by a sign. Gideon was a man of great faith, yet he needed first

to have the fleece wet when all was dry around, and then to have the fleece dry while the threshing-floor was wet. He needed to hear the soldiers' dream of the barley cake that tumbled upon the tent of Midian. He wanted signs and wonders or his heart would have fainted. With many others the desire for signs and wonders has been a great barrier to simple faith. Now the centurion did not say as Naaman did, "I thought He would surely come and put His hand over the place and recover the paralytic." No, he did not need Jesus to come to the house and say a word, or offer prayer, or even to touch the sick with His hand. "No, Master," said he, "there is no need for You to come. My servant is far away, lying sick and near to death. You need not stir an inch--say in a word, and he will be healed. Distance is nothing to You. Your word at a mile's distance can cure as well as your touch."

Oh, but this was grand faith! He wants no visible sign! His spiritual eyes see the invisible, and his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord!

His unstaggering faith requires no crutch. He wants nothing, but only prays that the Master will say the word! I do not think he expected to hear the Lord speak that word aloud, for in Luke he is described as praying Jesus not so much to say a word as to "say in a word." Perhaps he remembered the language of the Psalmist when he sang, "He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions," and he looked to that same creating and almighty Word for the restoration of his servant.

Now, Brethren, transfer this to yourselves. I pray the Holy Spirit that many here may have the faith which does not crave for signs and wonders. "I could believe," says one, "that I were saved, if I felt some marvelous work of the Law within my heart. I have heard of others who have been ready to despair, and have been tempted to commit suicide. If I felt as they felt I could then think that there was

Divine Grace for me." Ah, poor Simpleton. You know not what you say. Be glad to be delivered from such dreadful things as these, for if some have come out of them to Christ, I am afraid that some have been brought by them to the halter or to some other suicidal death.

Do not desire the terrors of Hell, but accept the tender mercy of our God whereby the Dayspring from on high has visited us. Horrors and dreads, if you felt them, would not help you! Believe me, they would do the very reverse. "No," says another, "I should like to feel an extraordinary sensation. If under the sermon tonight I should be struck down, as I have heard some have been in the Irish revivals. If I felt some remarkable physical, mental, or spiritual emotion such as I have never experienced before, I should say that this was the finger of God." My dear Hearer, why be so foolish? God's Word tells you that if you trust Jesus Christ you are saved. Is not God's Word enough?

Will you not take the assurance of God without laying down this and that as a condition for your Savior? Some of you talk and act as if the great God must do what you like, or else you will not believe Him! I have known persons who were once in the habit of giving away roast beef and other gifts to the poor at Christmas time, but who have given up the doing of it because of the picking and choosing of those who came to receive the gifts. One woman actually took back her meat because she wanted a piece of beef for boiling, and would have a boiling piece or none at all.

I have not wondered when persons who have been charitable and have not been allowed to do as they will with their own, that they have ceased to distribute their alms as before. Reason teaches us that when we receive benefits we are not

to dictate to our benefactors. And is God, when He saves your soul, to let a beggar like you be a chooser about the way in which it is to be

done? Are you to exact this and exact that, or else you will not condescend to be saved? This is infamous pride! Be ashamed, I pray you, be ashamed to indulge in it any longer. No longer demand new proof of God's truthfulness in the form of feelings and excitements. God's Word is worthy of your trust.

If you had these remarkable feelings, what would their evidence amount to if you looked at them as a mere man and not as a fanatic? If you were to meet an angel tonight, and he were to tell you that you would go to Heaven, you would have no reason to believe him, unless you believe in Jesus Christ. An angel who gave you any comfort while you remain an unbeliever would be a devil, even though he shone like an angel of light. But if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are baptized, you have God's Word for it that you are saved, and what do you need an angel's word for? Is not the word of Jehovah sufficient? Is a creature's testimony necessary to make the Lord's word worthy of credence?

No, say others, but we should be comforted if we could dream remarkable dreams. Now, what could there be to assure the soul as to its salvation in the vain and frolicsome motions of the mind when they are free from the bridle of reason? Dreams may sometimes happen to come true, but nine times out of ten they are nonsense. If good doctrine and wise warning are brought home to the heart by a dream, it should have none the less our most earnest heed. But if presumption should have a thousand visions to back it, it would be none the less dangerous. It would be a dreadful thing to hang one's confidence upon such a fragile thing as a dream.

No, no, Sir. You have God's Word, and will not believe it because you pretend that a dream would help you, and confirm your confidence. As if God were not to be trusted so well as your dreams! O be not so foolish,

but like this centurion say, "Speak the word only." Brethren, we must accept the bare Word of God in Christ Jesus as the basis of faith, for no other foundation is to be depended on for a moment. Not your feeling, but His promise must sustain you. Can you not consent to this? If you will do so you shall have peace. If you will come to God like that, you shall see many signs and many wonders, before long, of a better sort than you have ever dreamed of.

Your joy shall be like a river, and your peace shall overflow. But you must first come without these things. Come, and take God at His Word, and do Christ the honor to believe in Him without anything to corroborate what He says, and you shall find the blessing coming to you afterwards. This was a remarkable point in the centurion's faith--that he believed without demanding a sign.

V. Fifthly--one very remarkable point in this good man's faith was HIS CONVICTION THAT CHRIST COULD

CURE HIS SERVANT AT ONCE, "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." Ordinarily a successful combat with disease requires time. The surgeon must drive out from his strong entrenchments the fiend of disease, must chase him from one defense to another, and perhaps even then he may fail to dislodge his foe.

It may be many months or even years before some forms of disease can be eradicated. But the centurion believed that the word of Christ could remove the palsy, and do so at once. And why not? Omnipotence knows nothing of time any more than of any other of the hindrances which impede mortal progress. To the eternal God time is nothing. To Him a thousand years are as one day, and on the other hand, one day is as a thousand years. The faith that saves lays hold on this Truth that Christ Jesus who is now at the right hand of God can, in a moment, save the soul.

The dying thief did not imagine that his salvation would occupy a month. He simply said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," and the answer was, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise"--saved that day, saved at once. The pardon of sin is not the result of weeks of fasting, and months of repentance, and years of mortification. The sinner's eyes look to Christ and the sinner's sin is gone at once--

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

The new birth of the soul--the regeneration of our nature by the Holy Spirit--is not a work requiring a long period of time. It is in a moment that the Spirit of God visits our hearts and turns the stone to flesh. It may seem as though I talked without consideration, but yet I speak the words of Truth and soberness when I say that if the Lord puts forth the fullness of His power, sinners sitting in these galleries or in this area, might be saved before that clock ticks again. Who shall restrain the Lord and say what He can, or cannot, do?

All things are possible with Him, and we will therefore add, that if each one of you tonight were led to put his trust in Jesus, what I said was possible would be literally done. You would all retire, each one saved, and saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord who has taken us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put a new song into our mouths, and established our goings!" O that You would do this, good Lord, that Your name might have praise!

VI. Once more. One other point of wonder. THROUGHOUT THIS WHOLE STORY THE CENTURION'S DEEP HUMILITY WAS CONSPICUOUS, BUT THAT DEEP HUMILITY, INSTEAD OF WEAKENING HIS FAITH,

ONLY STRENGTHENED IT.

Pride is the associate of presumption, but humility is the companion of assurance. He who thinks that it needs but little Grace and power to save him, that he is, in fact, better than most, and as good as any, cannot believe at all. He may be able to presume, but be is unable to believe. Doubtless, presumption would grow well in the soil of his heart, but a broken heart, alone, becomes a believing heart, and an assured heart must first be a humble heart.

The centurion had done good service for the Jews. He loved their nation and had built them a synagogue. They thought a great deal of him, but he thought very little of himself. He said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof." I am not only not worthy of the blessing I ask, but not worthy that You should come into such communion with me as to tread my floor. Deeply humbled was the man, and you, also, must have a humbled spirit to become a Believer. I have met with a great many who, when they have felt a sense of their sin, have said directly, "I cannot believe in Christ."

Then you fancy, do you, that if you had less sin you could believe? No. I tell you it is not so. If your sense of sin is a hindrance to faith, your sense of righteousness would be infinitely more a barrier. To believe that I shall be saved because I am not a sinner is not faith. But to know that I am one of the very worst of sinners, and very guilty and very vile, and yet I place my trust in Jesus--this is faith. I do love, when I look at my sins, to look at the Cross, too. If I have been of service to God, and the Holy Spirit has helped me to do some good thing for the Church, it is scarcely faith to say that I then am at peace. Why, that is seeing, not believing!

But when I see my imperfections, and bemoan my follies, and lay my mouth in the very dust, and, by God's Grace can say--"Notwithstanding

all this, I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him"--that is faith. And I pray God that you may exercise it every day. If my sins were worse than they are, or if I could have a deeper apprehension of them, I would nevertheless rejoice that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. And, by His Grace, from that rock of confidence my soul should not remove.

My Brethren, do not imagine that to have faith in Christ you have to work yourselves up into the idea that there is some good thing in you which can recommend you to Christ. You are sailing on the wrong tack altogether when your trust leans on self. Faith is to come to Christ blind, and believe that He can open your eyes. It is to come to Him poor, and believe that He will make you rich. It is to come to Him as having nothing of your own, and take what He has to be yours forever and ever. It is, in fact, to see death written on the creature, and to find life in Him--corruption written on your best righteousness, and to count it to be as dross and dung--and then to take Jesus Christ to be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption, and your all.

I have thus, I trust, set forth what faith is in as simple a way as I know how to speak, and yet, simple as this statement is, if any of you do so believe, there will be glory brought to God by it--for no man ever did believe except the Holy Spirit led him to believe. "What?" says one, "such a simple thing as that?" Permit me to observe that it is the simplicity of faith that makes it difficult. If it were difficult there would be many who would attempt it. But because it is nothing but--"Believe and live,"--proud hearts will not yield to it. It is as simple as the first elements of spelling, and because it is so, men cannot understand it, for their pride must surround it with

mystery.

Men would desire to be wise, and therefore they puzzle themselves with that which a child may understand. What is wanted for a man to know Christ is for him to get his conceit of education winnowed out of him. I mean that what he thinks to be education must be all pulled away--that he may be made like a little child--to sit down at Jesus' feet and trust Jesus as a child believes its father's word. It is not going up that most of you want, but pulling down. It is not getting good, it is feeling you are not good which is the main matter for most of you to look to. It is not being better in your own esteem--it is being utterly undone in your own esteem--which will make you ready for Christ.

This you need, and when you have it I believe you will then come and cheerfully lay hold on this blessed, this simple way of salvation! It is suitable to the vilest, and yet suitable to the most moral. It is fitted, as one said once, to poor old women who are on their dying beds, and equally fitted to the most profound of philosophers--fitted for the poor, fitted for the rich--fitted for me, fitted for you. O that you would have my Lord to be your strong refuge!

May my Lord and Master grant that He may also marvel at your faith, dear Friends. And, though you had none when you came into this Tabernacle, may you go out rejoicing because the Lord has visited you, and helped you to believe in His name. Amen.

Chapter 29

The Profit Of Godliness In This Life

(No. 937)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation." 1 Timothy 4:8,9.

YOUR attention will be the more readily given to this passage, because Paul declares it to be a "faithful"--a most true and certain saying--and "worthy of all acceptation," that is to say, worthy to be received and practiced by us all. Paul has four of these faithful sayings. The first, occurs in 1 Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." The second is our text. The third is in 2 Timothy 2:12, "It is a faithful saying, if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." And the fourth is in Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

We may trace a connection between these faithful sayings. The first one lays the foundation of our eternal salvation in the free Grace of God, as shown to us in the mission of the great Redeemer. The next affirms the double blessedness which we obtain through this salvation--the blessings of the upper and nether springs of time and of eternity. The third shows one of the duties to which the chosen people are called--we are ordained to suffer for Christ with the promise that "if we suffer,

we shall also reign with Him." The last sets forth the active form of Christian service, bidding us diligently to maintain good works. Thus we have the root of salvation in free Grace.

Next, we have the privileges of that salvation in the life which now is, and in that which is to come. And we have also the two great branches of suffering with Christ and serving with Christ, loaded with the fruits of the Spirit. Let us treasure up these faithful sayings. Let them be the guides of our life, our comfort, and our instruction. The Apostle of the Gentiles proved them to be faithful. They are faithful still, not one word shall fall to the ground. They are worthy of all acceptation, let us accept them now and prove their faithfulness. Let these four faithful sayings be written on the four corners of your house.

Today we consider the second of the four, and we will read the text again, "Bodily exercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In the days when Paul wrote this Epistle, the Greeks and others paid great attention to physical culture, the development of the muscles, the proportion of the limbs, the production of everything in the body which might conduce to the soundness of manhood. The philosophy of Greece all looked that way, and therefore at the various gymnasia bodily exercises of an athletic and even violent kind were undergone by men with the view of developing the body, and so assisting the soul.

It may be that Timothy, being yet a young man, fancied that there was something in this philosophy. And something, indeed, there is. In the original the Apostle Paul admits that it is so, for the passage might be read thus--"Bodily exercise verily profits a little," or thus, "Bodily exercise profits for a short time." Physical training is of

some service-- attention to it is not sinful nor to be condemned. It is of some use and has its proper place, but still it has no very eminent position in the Christian system. It occupies a place far in the background in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles. It is but a minor part of a complete education. It profits a little, a little, for a little time.

But godliness, the worship of God, the fear of God, has a long and wealthy entail of blessing, having the promise both of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Its profiting is not little but great. Its benefit is not confined to the body, but is shared by the body and the soul. It is not limited by this mortal life, but overleaps the grave and brings its largest revenue of profit in the world where graves are all unknown.

This morning I am about to try and speak upon the profit of godliness to a man in this life. We will consider its having the promise of the life to come, in the evening, if God spares us.

With regard to this life, let it be remarked that the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ neither undervalues nor overvalues this present life. It does not sneer at this life as though it were nothing. On the contrary, it ennobles it, and shows the relation which it has to the higher and eternal life. It does not overvalue it by making this life, and the secular pursuits of it, the main object of any man. It puts it into an honorable but yet a secondary place, and says to the sons of men, "Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you."

It is not, however, very easy to keep to the middle point of exact truth as to a due estimate of this present life--he who does so is taught of God. There are many who undervalue this life--let me mention some of them to you. Those undervalue it who sacrifice it to indulge

their passions, or to gratify their appetites. Too many, for the sake of momentary gratifications, have shortened their lives and rendered their latter end bitterly painful to themselves. They conceived that the pleasures of the flesh were better than life. They were mistaken in their estimate. They made but a poor exchange when they chose lust and death, rather than purity and life.

The drunkard has been known to take his cups, though he knew that in so doing he was virtually poisoning himself. The man of hot passions has been seen to plunge into uncleanness, though the consequences of his folly have been plainly set before him. Men who for a morsel of meat, or a flash of merriment, are selling this world as well as the world to come, are fools, indeed. He that would have pleasure must not pursue it too furiously. Temperance is the rule here-- moderation and the use, not excess and the abuse--will secure to us the pleasure even of this mortal life. Value not, I pray you, the transient joys which the animal appetites can bring to you. At least value them not so much as to shorten life for their sakes.

Some evidently undervalue their lives because they make them wretched through envy. Others are richer than they are, and they think it a miserable thing to be alive at all while others possess more of this world's goods than they. They walk, they say, and toil while yonder person, who has no more deserts than they, is riding in his chariot. So, indeed, they count the chariot the main thing and not the life, and they will not enjoy their life because they cannot have a certain coveted addition which another possesses.

Haman is not grateful for all the mercies of life while unbending Mordecai sits in the king's gate. He counts his honey to be bitterness because he cannot lord it at his will. God gets no thanks at all from the man for the innumerable mercies which he has. These are nothing. He

pines for some particular supposed mercy which he has not. He considers that the fact of his being alive, and being favored of God in many respects, is nothing at all to be considered, because he has not all that big avarice might wish for. O poison not life by the envy of others, for if you do so, you miserably undervalue it!

The slaves of avarice undervalue their lives, for they do not care to make life happy, but pinch themselves in order to accumulate wealth. The miser who starves himself in order that he may fill his bags may well be reasoned with in this way--"Is not the life more than the meat, and the body than raiment? Skin for skin, yes, all that other men have will they give for their lives. But you give your life for this wealth, this glittering dust. You are willing to forego all the enjoyments that this life might afford you, that you may have a heap to leave to your uncertain heirs, who will probably squander it, and certainly forget the hands that scraped the hoard together."

Why should I throw away myself for the sake of dying rich? Is it true success in life to have enjoyed nothing, to have poisoned all my existence merely that the world might be informed in a corner of the Illustrated News that I died worth so many thousands of pounds? This is to undervalue life, indeed.

So, also, do they undervalue it who in foolhardiness are ready to throw it away on the slightest pretext. He that for his country's sake, or for the love of his fellow creature, risks life and loses it, truly deserves to be called a hero. But he, who, to provoke laughter and to win the applause of fools, will venture limb and life without need is but a fool himself, and deserves no praise whatever. He undervalues life who will display an art which endangers it, or who will run the risk of it for anything whatever short of the laudable motive of preserving liberty to his country, or life to his fellow men.

Holy Scripture never teaches us to undervalue our own lives. He that said, "You shall not kill," meant that we were not to kill ourselves any more than others. We ought to seek by all we can do in the surroundings of our habitations, by our cleanliness, by carefully observing sanitary laws, by never encouraging dangerous exhibitions, and by every other means to show our care of the life that now is, for it is a precious thing.

Yet, my Brethren, there can be such a thing as overvaluing this life, and multitudes have fallen into that error. Those overvalue it who prefer it to eternal life. Why, it is but as a drop compared with the ocean, if you measure time with eternity. Seventy or eighty years of dwelling here below--what are they when compared with infinite ages of existence in the Presence of the Most High? I reckon that this present life is not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us.

When men in fearful moments have denied the faith for the sake of saving their lives, they have overvalued this life. When to preserve themselves from the sword, or the fire, or the tortures of the rack, they have denied the name of Jesus, they have made a mistake and exchanged gold for dross. Alas, how many of us, in like condition, might have fallen into the same error? They overvalue this life who consider it to be a better thing than Divine love, for the love of God is better than life--His loving kindness is better than life itself.

Some would give anything for their lives, but they would give nothing for God's love. If their lives were in danger, they would hasten to the physician, but though they enjoy not the love of God they yet sit at ease, and seek not the priceless benefit. They who feel aright think it a cheap thing to die, but an awful thing to live apart from God. They recognize that life would be but death unless God were with us, and

that death itself is but the vestibule of life while God is our joy and our strength! Let us never set the present life before Divine love, and never let it be compared even for a moment with the pursuit of God's Glory.

Every Christian man is to feel that he is to take care of his life in comparison with any earthly glory. But if it comes to a choice between God's Glory and his life, he is to have no timorous hesitation in the matter, but at once sacrifice his life freely at his Lord's altar. This has been ever the spirit of true Christians. They have never been anxious to die, nor have they been fearful concerning the loss of life. They have not thrown away their lives--they have known their value too well--but they have not withheld their lives for Christ's sake. They have esteemed Him to be better than life itself. So you see the Scripture teaches us that there is a proper middle course in estimating this present life, and if we follow its instructions, we shall neither undervalue nor overvalue it.

It appears from the text, that godliness influences this present life, puts it in its true position, and becomes profitable to it.

I. First, let me observe that GODLINESS CHANGES THE TENURE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS. It has "the promise of the life that now is." I want you to mark the words--"it has the promise of the life that now is." An ungodly man lives, but how? He lives in a very different respect from a godly man. Sit down in the cell of Newgate with a man condemned to die. That man lives, but he is reckoned dead in Law. He has been condemned. If he is now enjoying a reprieve, yet he holds his life at another's pleasure, and soon he must surrender it to the demands ofjustice. I, sitting by the side of him, breathing the same air, and enjoying what in many respects is only the same life, yet live in a totally different sense. I have not forfeited my life to the Law. I enjoy it as far as

the Law is concerned, as my own proper right--the Law protects my life, though it will destroy his. The ungodly man is condemned already, condemned to die, for the wages of sin is death. And his whole life here is nothing but a reprieve granted by the longsuffering of God.

But a Christian man is pardoned and absolved. He owes not his life now to penal justice. When death comes to him it will not be at all in the sense of an infliction of a punishment. It will not be death, it will be the transfer of his spirit to a better state, the slumbering of his body for a little while in its proper couch to be awakened in a nobler likeness by the trump of the archangel. Now, is not life itself changed when held on so different a tenure? To live because I am now protected by the Law--is not that better than to be living at the sufferance of the Law?

To live the life of an absolved man, of a free man, the life of God's own child even in this present life--is not that a different thing from living the life of one to whom each hour measures out a nearer approach to the capital sentence, and to the execution of well-deserved punishment? The first is a life of pleasure--the second, disguise it as you may, is death in life, a life overshadowed with the darkness of eternal wrath.

"Godliness has the promise of the life that now is." That word changes the tenure of our present life in this respect, that it removes in a sense the uncertainty of it. God has given to none of you unconverted ones any promise of the life that now is. You are like squatters on a common who pitch their tents, and by the sufferance of the lord of the manor may remain there for awhile. But at a moment's notice you must up tents and away.

But the Christian has the promise of the life that now is. That is to say, he has the freehold of it. It is life given to him of God, and he

really enjoys it. He has an absolute certainty about it. In fact, the life that now is has become to the Christian a foretaste of the life to come. Do you say that it is uncertain to the Christian whether he shall die or live? I grant you in one sense his remaining here is uncertain. Yet this is certain to him--he shall never die until it is best for him to die. He shall never depart this life till he is ripe for the life to come--he shall never, in fact, be removed from his present tabernacle till he himself, if he knew all, would be perfectly willing to be removed.

Willing! Yes, far more! Overjoyed that his tabernacle should be dissolved that he might enter into his "House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The tenure is very different between the uncertainty of the ungodly who has no rights and no legal titles, and the blessed certainty of the child of God who lives by promise.

Let me add that this word seems to me to sweeten the whole of human life to the man that has it. Godliness has the promise of life that now is--that is to say, everything that comes to a godly man comes to him by promise. Whereas if the ungodly man has any blessing apparent, it does not come by promise, it comes overshadowed by a terrible guilt which curses his very blessings and makes the responsibilities of his wealth and of his health and position redound to his own destruction. It works as a savor of death unto death through his willful disobedience.

Everything that comes to the Christian comes by promise. He sees his daily bread, and he says, "It has my Father's mark on it. He said my bread should be given me. Here comes the water from the crystal stream, it is flavored with the love of God. He said my water shall be sure." He puts on his raiment, and it may not be so comely as the dress of others, but be says, "This is the livery my Father promised me." He

sleeps, and it is beneath the canopy of Divine protection. He wakes and he walks abroad with angels, according to the promise, bearing him up in their hands.

Afflictions come to him by promise, the broad arrow of the great King is set on each one of them, for was it not said of old, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me you shall have peace"? He can see everywhere the trace of Divine faithfulness in the keeping of the Covenant promise. He lives not the life of Ishmael, who by-and-by may be banished to the wilderness with the bondwoman, his mother. No, he lives the life of Isaac, the child of the promise, who is before long to inherit all things, and who even now is the darling child of his father, and rejoices in his father's love.

There is a vast difference between having the life that now is, and having the promise of the life that now is--having God's promise about it to make it all gracious, to make it all certain, and to make it all blessed as a token of love from

God.

II. It is time that we pass on to THE BENEFIT WHICH GODLINESS BESTOWS IN THIS LIFE. Perhaps the fullness of the text is the fact that the flower of life, the crown of life, the highest blessedness and bliss of life, is secured to us by godliness. I have no doubt you have often heard interpretations of this text, very excellent--and it is not for me to judge or censure them--which lead to the belief that the way to make the best of both worlds is to be a Christian.

I also subscribe to that, but I must demur to the way in which it is generally put. There is an excellent sermon by that notable Divine, Saurin, in which he urges this text as a proof that the best hope of success in the world is enjoyed by the Christian. I demur to that being the teaching of this text. There may be some truth in it, but I do not

think it is much to be insisted on. It has been said that he who fears God has the best guarantee of health. It is true, there is nothing in godliness to destroy the health of the body. The true Christian is preserved from many of those passions, and excitements, and indulgences, which tend to produce disease and to bring on early death. That much is true, but I do not believe that godliness inevitably ensures good health. I believe, rather, that some godly men absolutely require for the highest perfection of their godliness, that they should be visited with sickness. It seems to me to be a very strange theory, to teach that godliness guarantees health, for it would lead to the supposition that all people who are unhealthy must necessarily be or have been deficient in godliness. And this is all the more untenable when we observe that some of the best people we have ever met have been those who have for years been bedridden by affliction which they certainly never brought upon themselves by any kind of sin.

I would say to every young man, there is nothing in the pursuit of godliness that can injure your health, but I would not say to him, "If you are godly you have the promise of being a healthy man," for I do not believe it, since unhealthi-ness may come from a thousand other sources besides impropriety of conduct. I will go farther, and affirm that godliness, when carried to its highest and most honorable degree of excellence, might sometimes render it necessary for a man to place himself where he would of necessity become unhealthy. I know that it was the highest godliness which made our missionaries fix their abodes among the fever marshes of Fernando Po and Old Calabar to preach the Gospel.

When I heard from one of our missionaries, as I did personally, that he had at last become so acclimatized that he did not have the fever oftener than about two days out of three, I could not think that

godliness in his case necessarily involved health. But I gathered that it might so happen that an eminently godly man might feel it necessary to go where he might say, "Farewell, Health, you are not, after all, the promise of the life that now is. I can bear to suffer, I can bear to creep about this world sick and ready to die if I may but have what is better than health--the luxury of winning souls for Christ--the honor and joy of instructing the ignorant in the faith of the crucified Redeemer."

It were wicked to think that a man has less of godliness who sacrifices his health for Christ's sake. He certainly would not be the man to miss the promise, and yet if health were such a promise he would evidently have missed it.

Again, we have heard it argued that the godly man has the best prospect of wealth in this world. Now I will also grant that as godliness delivers us from a multitude of expenses into which riot and dissipation would lead us, and as godliness creates habits of sobriety and economy, as godliness begets honesty, and honesty is even in a worldly sense the best policy, there are some reasons why Christian traders should grow rich, and godly men have much in their favor.

But I also cannot help recognizing that while trade is as it is, there are many things which a Christian man cannot do, and dare not do, which some have done, and are to this day rich for having done them--dirty acts, mean, low, and groveling--which have brought wealth to the creatures who have practiced them. And yet more--I have known the best of Christians, and men, too, whose outward conduct has been fully conformable to their profession--who have lived and died poor. Now, if wealth is the promise of the life that now is, I venture to say that godliness does not infallibly or even generally secure it. The God-fearing man may have as fair an opportunity as any other in the

race of life, but all things considered, this is all we can say. It may be that the godly man may be a poor man, and from a dozen circumstances not connected with his religion or his morals, may live and may die poor in this world, but rich in faith.

It has also been said that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, in the sense that a Christian man is the most likely to have a good name, fame, and reputation among his fellow men. That also is true in a measure. In well-regulated society, the believer in Christ, through the holiness of his character, will be had in esteem, and even among the worst of men the excellence of his conduct will command a measure of respect. But for all that, I do not believe that repute among men is the promise of the life that now is--for what is it after all? Good repute among men, if it is deserved, I shall not decry. But if by any chance slander should come and take away the good man's name--and it has often done so--shall I say pity the calumniated saint as one who has lost the promise of the life that now is?

I dare not think it! Far rather would I bid him rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before him. And who is the most likely person to be slandered? Is it not the man who is most consistent with his profession, and most zealous in the spread of the faith? The Apostle Paul certainly never accounted riches to be the promise of the life that now is, for he had nothing. He had learned to be poor, and to labor with his hands. He certainly never reckoned health to be the promise of the life that now is, for he was in such circumstances of peril by land and sea, and among false brethren, that his life was in jeopardy for the Gospel. And as to a good name, he never regarded that as the promise of the life that now is, for he was willingly accounted as the offscouring of all things--some thought him mad, others thought him base, his repute with

the multitude was gone.

I will repeat what I have said, lest I be misunderstood. Under ordinary circumstances it is true that godliness wears a propitious face both towards health, and wealth, and name--and he who has respect to these things, shall not find himself, as a rule, injured in the pursuit of them by his godliness. But still I disdain altogether the idea that all these three things together are, or even make up a part of the promise of the life that now is. I believe some persons have the life that now is in its fullness, and the promise of it in its richest fulfillment, who have neither wealth, health, nor fame. Being blessed with the suffering Master's smile and Presence, they are happier far than those who roll in wealth, who luxuriate in fame, and have all the rich blessings which health includes.

Let me now show you what I think is the promise of the life that now is. I believe it to be an inward happiness, which is altogether independent of outward circumstances. It is something richer than wealth, fairer than health, and more substantial than fame. This secret of the Lord, this deep delight, this calm repose, godliness always brings in proportion as it reigns in the heart.

Let us try and show that this is so. A godly man, my Brethren, is one who is at one with his Maker. It must always be right with the creature when it is at one with the Creator. The Creator is Omnipotent, All-Just, All-Holy. When the creature is out of gear with the Creator it will always be dashing itself against the pricks, and wounding itself. As the Creator will not change, if the creature runs not parallel to the Divine will, the creature must suffer, must be unhappy, must be restless. But when godliness puts our will into conformity with the Divine will, the more fully it does so, the more certainly it secures to us happiness even in the life that now is.

I am not happy necessarily because I am in good health, but I am happy if I am content to be out of health when God wills it. I am not happy because I am wealthy, but I am happy if it pleases me to be poor because it pleases God I should be. I am not happy because I happen to be famous, but I am happy if, being all unknown, I count it my highest fame to be accepted in the Beloved. A heart reconciled to the Divine will has full possession of the promise of the life that now is, for such peace with God is perfect happiness where it perfectly exists--conformity to God's will is Heaven below. I pray that godliness may work in all of you a conformity to the Divine will, and then I am sure, whatever your outward lot may be, you will win the promise of the life that now is.

The Christian man starting in life as such is best fitted for this life. He is like a vessel fittingly stored for all the storms and contrary currents that may await it. The Christian is like a soldier who must gladly go to battle, but he is protected by the best armor that can be procured. He wears the helmet and the breastplate. He wears the entire Divine panoply which heavenly wisdom has prepared to protect him from every dart of his adversaries. He has the promise of the life that already is, just as the man with a good sword and good armor has the best promise of success in battle.

O that God may grant us Grace to know and feel that the best instruments and weapons of the warfare of this life are to be found in the arsenals of holiness, in the armories of confidence in God! In this sense we have again the promise of the life that now is. With a Christian all things that happen to him work for good. Is not this a rich part of the promise of the life that now is? What if the waves roar against him--they speed his boat towards the haven! What if the thunders and lightning come forth? They clear the atmosphere and

promote his soul's health.

He gains by his losses, he grows healthy by his sicknesses, he lives by dying, he is enriched by being despoiled of his goods. Do you ask for any better promise than this? Is it not better that all things should work for my good, than that all things should be as I would wish to have them? They might all work my pleasure, and yet might all work my ruin. But now if they do not always please me--yet if they always benefit me--is not this the best promise of the life that now is?

The Christian enjoys his God under all circumstances. That, again, is the promise of the life that now is. I spoke of his being reconciled to God--he is much more than that--he delights himself in his God. He finds God in Nature. The landscape glows for him with a more Divine color than any other eye can see. As for the heavens, with their starry glories, there is a light in them which has not yet been beheld by the natural man. He sees God in his solitude, and peoples his loneliness with the spirits that are akin with the Most High. He is, wherever he may be, never debarred from the society he loves best. A wish will find his God, a tear will bring him his best Beloved.

He has but to sigh and cry when on the bed of sickness, and God comes and makes his bed for him. Blessed man, he has, indeed, the promise of the life that now is, for in it all, and over it all, he sees the

Divine love shining for him with a supernal splendor and making earth but the porch of Heaven. This is to have the life that now is in the fullness of the promise. I am sure you will agree with me that the genuine possessor of godliness has the promise of the life that now is in his freedom from many of those cares and fears which rob life of all its luster.

The man without godliness is weighted with the care of every day, and of all the days that are to come--the dread remembrance of the past,

and the terror of the future as well. The godly man knows that all the past is forgiven, his transgressions are blotted out. As for the present, he casts that burden on the Lord. As for the future, he would not pry into it with anxious eye, but he leaves God to rule and govern as He wills. He sits down, calmly content that his Father's will is right and good towards him. And as he is thus free from care, so is he free from the fear of men.

Ungodly men, many of them, are servile to their fellow men. It is to them a most important question whether they are smiled upon or frowned at by their fellow worms. The godly man has learned to lift his head above the common race of mankind, and when he lives as he should, he neither thinks a thing the better because men praise it, nor the worse because they censure it. His rule is not popular opinion, nor the dictates of the philosophy of the hour. He believes what God tells him to be true, and what God prescribes he knows to be right. And he does this careless of man's judgment, for none can judge him but his Master.

That man has the promise of the life that now is who is in full enjoyment of the sweets of a clear conscience. He can afford to snap his fingers in the face of all mankind and declare that if the heavens themselves should fall, he would do the right, and dare all things for God. Oh, to have the yoke of human judgment from off your neck, and the bondage of man's domineering opinion from off your spirit! This is to receive the promise of the life that now is.

Moreover, the fear of death has gone from the Christian. This with many deprives the life that now is of everything that is happy and consoling. They are afraid in their merriest moments that the skeleton will disturb the feast. And when the dance is merriest, they think they hear the sound of the trumpet that will silence all. But the Christian

is not afraid. To him the prospect of departure is rather joyous than grievous, and the breaking up of this mortal state is an event he looks for as the clearing away of multitudes of sorrows and the bringing in of mighty joys.

Brothers and Sisters, to be free from the fear of death is to make life truly life--and he has it who leans wholly upon Christ--and knows that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. Put these things together-peacefulness with his fellow men, peace with God, a sense that all things are working for his good, fearlessness of man's judgment, communion with the Most High--and surely you have described in a few words the very flower of life--the thing that makes it worth while to live.

This does not lie, as I have said before, in accumulated treasure. It does not blush in the rosy cheek. It does not dwell in the trump of fame. It resides within, when the man walks with God and subdues the earth beneath his feet. When the soul communes with the spiritual, and makes the visible to glow in the light of the unseen. When the man's peace and joy all stream from the deep springs of God's love, and the man lives in God, and God lives in him. Herein lies the highest kind of life--it is the flower of the life that now is--and GODLINESS it is that has the promise of it.

I must not detain you longer, except to make an application of the subject to the present assembly. Brothers and Sisters, you who have godliness, and live in the fear of God, let me entreat you to believe that there is provided for you in godliness, comfort, joy, and delight for the life that now is. You need not postpone your feasting upon Christ till you see Him face to face. Feed on Him this day. You need not wait for the joys of the Holy Spirit till you have shaken off this cumbrous clay. The joy of the Lord is your strength today. You need not

think that your peace and rest remain as yet in the future, hidden from you. Eternal life with its blessings is a present possession.

They that believe do enter into rest, and may enter into rest now. The clusters of Eshcol are before you, brought to you by a Divine hand before you cross the Jordan--

"The men of Grace ha ve found Glory begun below, Celestial fruits on earthly ground From faith and hope do grow."

We do not say that godliness has made all Believers rich, for some here will be content always to be poor. The whole body of the faithful cannot claim that godliness has brought them earthly treasure, for some of the greatest of them have written that if in this life only they had hope, they would have been of all men the most miserable. But without exception, the whole of us can unanimously declare that we have found in godliness the highest happiness, the supreme delight, the richest consolation.

I pray you, therefore, who profess godliness, be not content unless you have the promise of the life that now is. Believe that you can not only make this life sublime, but make it joyous. Believe that you can now be raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. You cannot find a Heaven in things below, for the moth is there, and the rust that corrupts. But you can, while here, if you set your affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth, find Glory begun within you, and a young Heaven already shining about your path. The life that now is-- claim it! Up, you sons of Israel, and slay the Amalekites that would take away from you your comfort! Arise, you men that fear the Lord, and demand that doubts and fears, like the accursed Canaanites, shall be chased from the land. For the promise of God ought to be believed, and in the believing of it, your peace shall be like a river, and your joy shall overflow.

Another application of the text is this. There is a bearing of it upon the sinner. It is quite certain, O ungodly man, that the promise of the life that now is belongs only to those who are godly. Are you content to miss the cream of this
life? I pray you, if you will not think of the life to come, at least think of this. You desire to be happy. You have intelligence enough to know that happiness does not consist in externals, but in the state of your mind. I assure you, and there are thousands of my Brethren who can affirm the same, that after having tried the ways of sin, we infinitely prefer the ways of righteousness for their own pleasure's sake even here, and we would not change with ungodly men even if we had to die like dogs.

With all the sorrow and care which Christian life is supposed to bring, we would prefer it to any other form of life beneath the stars. There is no man like the Christian, after all. Happy are you, O Israel, a people saved of the Lord! We do not come to you and tell you that godliness will make you rich, although there is no need that it should make you poor. We do not tell you it will make you healthy. It certainly will not make you the reverse. But these are not the things with which we would bribe you--these are inferior blessings, which we dare not set before you as worthy of your seeking after in the first instance.

But we do tell you that if you will but seek the Lord while He may be found, and put your trust in His Christ, who came to put away sin, you shall have the happiest, best, noble, most desirable life that can be enjoyed on earth! Now many of you believe this. I know you do. In your hearts you envy Christians--even poor Christians. You feel that you would gladly be as sick or as poor as yonder pious saint, if you might have his hope, if you might have his God. Well, if you know which is

best, have which is best. "May I have it?" says one. Who said you might not? Does not the Lord invite you to taste and see that He is good? Has not He even commanded you, and are not these His Words, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"? Simply to trust, and to rely--this is to begin the Divine life, and this will introduce you into a nobler sphere than mortals know of. They rejoice when corn and wine fill their barns and their vats, but you will say, "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon me," and in that you will find a richer joy than they. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." God bless you, for Christ's sake.

[Sermon #946, The Profit of Godliness in the Life to Come, is the sermon Brother Spurgeon preached in the evening of June 19, 1870, and is the companion sermon to this one.]

Chapter 30

A Good Soldier Of Jesus Christ

(No. 938)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2 Timothy 2:2,3.

MANY men, many minds. In reference to what a Christian is there have been very many and diverse opinions. According to the notions of some, a Christian is an exquisite of remarkably delicate tastes. He cannot worship except it be in a place whose architecture is correctly Gothic, otherwise his dainty soul will be shocked. He is unable to offer prayer aright unless his devotions are uplifted upon the wings of the choicest music. And, even then, scarcely will he be successful unless he is aided by sundry gentlemen, whose pedigree, like that of racehorses, can be clearly traced, and whose garments the tailor has fashioned according to the directions of the ecclesiastical fashion book for the various seasons of the year.

If this is to be a Christian in these days, it must be confessed that Paul has said little concerning this delicate and artistic sort of creature, unless, indeed, he had reference to it in Galatians 4:9, 10, 11, which read at your leisure--neither would Paul's Master acknowledge it.

With some a Christian is a spiritual gourmet. He attends upon the ministry of the Word for no purpose but to be fed. He strongly denounces every sermon that is aimed at the conversion of sinners, for he looks even upon the Bible itself as a book solely intended to yield him personal consolation. The more any doctrinal teaching promises him

a monopoly of good things, and the more it excludes others, the better he enjoys it--it being to him a particular part of the sweetness of the feast to believe that but a very slender company may dare to partake of it.

For him to live is to enjoy and not to serve. To gratify his selfishness he would blot out the free invitations of the Gospel. He is not a hearer only, but certainly he is not also a doer. He is a hearer and a feeder, in a certain coarse sense, upon the Word of God, and nothing more. That is not Paul's ideal of a Christian. He does not picture him with his napkin in his hand, sitting at a banquet table, but rather with a sword girt upon his thigh, ready for the conflict.

To some, the highest form of Christian is a great reader--a profound student of the best of books--for the purpose of composing spiritual riddles. He reads for no practical end. He is a picker-out of words, a speller-over of syllables, a magnifier of microscopic points, a proficient in biblical hair-splitting. The more a passage perplexes others the more sure he is of its meaning. He cares most for things which have the least practical bearing. He is a peeper through spiritual spyglasses, fancying that he can interpret what wiser men leave to God to expound. He is a hunter after spiritual conies, which, if caught, would never pay the huntsman for his toil, while the weightier matters he holds in small esteem. This does not seem to have been Paul's conception of a Christian. For the Apostle was no lover of foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife.

And I am afraid I must add that with some the ideal of a Christian is that of a man who can sleep out his existence in blissful serenity--a man who, having believed, or professed to believe in Christ--has settled his lifework forever, and from now on can say, "Soul, take your ease, you have from now on much goods laid up for many years in your

own security. Eat, drink, be merry in the Gospel. But as for feeding the hungry or clothing the naked, are you your brother's keeper? What is that to you? See you to yourself, and if you, yourself are right, let fate, or Providence, or Sovereignty, take care of the rest."

Paul does not appear to have pictured true Believers as sluggards sound asleep upon the downiest beds. His description of a Christian in the text is that of a soldier. And that means something far different either from a religious fop, whose best delight is music and millinery, or a theological critic who makes a man an offender for a word. Or a spiritual glutton who cares for nothing but a lifelong enjoyment of the fat things full of marrow. Or an ecclesiastical slumberer who longs only for peace for himself. Paul represents him as a soldier and that, I say, is quite another thing.

For what is a soldier? A soldier is a practical man, a man who has work to do, and hard, stern work. He may sometimes, when he is at his ease, wear the fineries of war, but when he comes to real warfare he cares little enough for them. The dust and the smoke, and the garments rolled in blood--these are for those who go soldiering. And swords all hacked, and dented armor, and bruised shields--these are the things that mark the good, the practical, soldier. Truly to serve God, really to exhibit Christian graces, fully to achieve a lifework for Christ, actually to win souls--this is to bear fruit worthy of a Christian.

A soldier is a man of deeds, and not of words. He has to contend and fight. In war times his life knows little of luxurious ease. In the dead of night, perhaps, the trumpet sounds to boot and saddle--just at the time when he is most weary--and he must hurry to the attack just when he would best prefer to take his rest in sleep. The Christian is a soldier in an enemy's country always needing to stand on his watchtower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and

blood--with far worse foes--namely, with spiritual wickedness in high places.

The Christian is a self-sacrificing man as the soldier must be. To protect his country, the soldier must expose his own bosom. To serve his King, he must be ready to lay down his life. Surely he is no Christian who never felt the spirit of self-sacrifice. If I live unto myself I am living unto the flesh, and of the flesh I shall reap corruption. Only he who lives to his God, to Christ, to the Truth of God, to the Church, and to the good old cause--only he is the man who can reckon himself at all to be a soldier of Jesus Christ.

A soldier is a serving man. He does not follow his own pleasure. He is under law and rule. Each hour of the day has its prescribed duty. And he must be obedient to the word of another and not to his own will and whim. Such is the Christian. We serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Though no longer the slaves of man so as to dread his frown, we are servants of Christ who has loosed our bonds.

The soldier is full often a suffering man. There are wounds, there are toils, there are frequent stays in the hospitals-- there may be ghastly cuts which let the soul out with the blood. Such the Christian soldier must be ready to suffer, enduring hardship, not looking for pleasure of a worldly kind in this life, but counting it his pleasure to renounce his pleasure for Christ's sake. Once again, the true soldier is an ambitious being. He pants for honor, seeks for glory. On the field of strife he gathers his laurels, and amidst a thousand dangers he reaps renown.

The Christian is fired by higher ambitions than any earthly warrior ever knew. He sees a crown that can never fade. He loves a King who best of all is worthy to be served. He has a motive within him which moves him to the noble deeds-- a Divine spirit impelling him to the

most self-sacrificing actions. Thus you see the Christian is a soldier, and it is one of the main things in Christian life to contend earnestly for the faith, and to fight valorously against sin.

Paul does not exhort Timothy to be a common, or ordinary soldier, but to be a "good soldier of Jesus Christ." For all soldiers, and all true soldiers may not be good soldiers. There are men who are but just soldiers and nothing more. They only need sufficient temptation and they readily become cowardly, idle, useless and worthless. But he is the good soldier who is bravest of the brave, courageous at all times. He is zealous, does his duty with heart and earnestness. He is the good soldier of Jesus Christ who, through Divine Grace, aims to make himself as able to serve his Lord as shall be possible.

He tries to grow in Grace and to be perfected in every good word and work that he may be in his Master's battles fit for the roughest and sternest service, and ready to bear the very brunt of the fray. David had many soldiers, and good soldiers, too, but you remember it was said of many, "These attained not unto the first three." Now Paul, if I read him rightly, would have Timothy try to be of the first three, to be a good soldier. And surely I would, this morning, say to my dear comrades in the little army of Christ meeting here--let each one of us try to attain unto the first three. Let us ask to be numbered among the King's mighties, to do noble work for Him and honorable service, that we may bring to our Master's cause fresh glory. Be it ours to covet earnestly the best gifts, and as we have had much forgiven, let us love much, and prove that love by action.

Before I proceed fully to open up this metaphor, let me say that though we shall use military terms this morning, and stirring speech, it should ever be remembered that we have no war against persons, and that the weapons which we use are not such as are forged for the deadly

conflicts of mankind. The wars of a Christian are against principles, against sins, against the miseries of mankind, against that Evil One who has led man astray from his Maker. Our wars are against the iniquity which keeps man an enemy to himself. The weapons that we use are holy arguments and consecrated lives, devotion and prayer to God, teaching and example among the sons of men.

Ours is battling for the peace, and fighting for rest. We disturb the world to make it quiet, and turn it upside down to set it right. We pull down strongholds that they may not pull down the Zion of God. We dash down the mighty that the humble and the meek may be established. We have no sympathy with any other war, but count it an evil of the direst sort, let it be disguised as it may. Now with that caution, whatever I shall seem to say will not sound as though I loved or excused ordinary warfare--for nothing can be more abhorrent to the Christian man than wholesale slaughter. Nothing can be more desired by us than the promised era when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.

Now let us come to the work of this morning. First, we shall describe a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and when we have done so, we shall exhort you to be such.

I. First, then, this morning, we shall endeavor TO DESCRIBE A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST. We must begin with this fundamental--he must be loyal to his King. A soldier of Jesus Christ owns the Divine Redeemer as his King, and confesses His sole and undivided sovereignty in the spiritual kingdom. He abhors Antichrist in all its forms, and every principle that opposes itself to the reign of the Beloved Prince of Peace. Jesus is to him both Lord and God. The day when he enlisted, he did, as it were, put his finger into the print of the nails, and said with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

This was his enlistment declaration, and he remains true to it. "Christ is All," is his motto, and to win all men to obedience to Immanuel is his lifework. Till he sheathes his sword in the last victory, the Crucified is sole monarch of his soul. For Him he lives, for Him he would even dare to die. He has entered into solemn league and covenant, to maintain against all comers that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Moreover, the Christian soldier not only acknowledges Jesus to be his King, but his heart is full of loving devotion to Him as such. Nothing can make his heart leap like the mention of that august, that more than royal name. He remembers who Jesus is, the Son of God, "the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God." He remembers what Jesus did, how He loved him, and gave Himself for him. He looks to the Cross and remembers the streams of blood whereby the elect were redeemed, even when they were enemies of God. He remembers Christ in Heaven, enthroned at the right hand of the Father.

He loves Him there, and it ravishes his heart to think that God has highly exalted the once-despised and rejected One, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. He pants for the time when the Crucified shall come in His Glory, and rule the nations as their liege Lord. He loves Jesus so that he feels he belongs to Him altogether, bought with His blood, redeemed by His power, and comforted by His Presence. He delights to know that he is not his own, for he is bought with a price. And since he loves his King, and loves Him with an ardor unquenchable--for many waters cannot drown his love, neither can the floods quench it--he loves all the King's Brethren and servants for the King's sake.

He hails his Brethren in arms with hearty affection. He loves the grand

old banner of the Gospel. He prays for the wind of the Holy Spirit to expand its furls, that all eyes may behold its beauties. He is steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints, and rejoices so much at every doctrine of the Gospel that he would gladly lay down his life to preserve it to the world. Above all, he loves the crown of his King, and the cause of his Master. Oh, could he set the Captain of his salvation higher among men, he would be content to die in the ditch of neglect and scorn! Could he but see the King come to His own, and the Heir of all things loyally acknowledged by His revolted provinces, he would be satisfied whatever might become of himself. His heart is more than loyal, it is full of personal affection for the Chief among ten thousand.

I ask you, Brethren, whether it is so with you? Believing, yes, knowing that it is so with many, I would to God it were thus with all.

Brethren, I know you love Jesus well, no music sounds to your ears so sweetly as His charming name. No song of choicest minstrel is half so sweet. The very thought of Him with rapture fills your breasts. Assuredly you have one of the first marks of good soldiers--go on, I pray you, to that which lies beyond.

The next characteristic of a good soldier is that he is obedient to his captain's commands. He would be no soldier at all who would not take his marching orders from his leader, but must needs act after his own mind. He would soon be dismissed from service, if not shot by order of a court martial for crimes which military rule cannot tolerate. Now, with-

out enlarging on that illustration, let me ask every Christian here, and myself first of all, are we doing all the Master's will? Do we wish to know the Master's will? I should not like that any part of the Scripture should be distasteful to me. I would tremble if there were

portions of my Lord's Testimony which I feared to read, or found it convenient to forget.

It is terrible when men are obliged to pass over certain texts, or else to cut and square them to make them agree with their beliefs. We should not practice an ordinance merely because our Church teaches it, or our parents believed in it. We must read the Scriptures and search the question for ourselves, or we are not respectful to our Lord. The soldier who did not take the trouble to read the orders of his superior might justly be suspected of mutinous intentions. Disobedience rankles in any heart where there is carelessness about knowing the Lord's will. Be courageous enough always to look Scripture in the face--it is, after all, nothing more than your bare duty.

Better for us that we changed our sentiments every day in order to be right, than that we held to them obstinately while we had some fear that perhaps we were wrong. To live a life of obedience is a greater matter than some suppose. Obedience is no second-rate virtue--"to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." "If you love Me"--what does Jesus say, "Go to the stake for Me," or, "Preach before kings for Me"? No, neither of these things is expressly selected, but "If you love Me, keep My commandments," as though this were the surest and most accepted test of love. May you thus, then, being loyal to the King, be in the second place obedient to His commands.

The third matter for a good soldier to mind is this--if he is, indeed, a first-class soldier, worthy of the service--to conquer will be his ruling passion. The fight is on, and the soldier's blood is up, and now he feels, "I must drive the enemy from his entrenchment, I must take yonder redoubt. I must plant our conquering standard on the castle of the foe, or I must die. Accursed be the sun if he goes down this day

and sees me turn my back upon the enemy." He is resolved that he will win or lie cold and stark upon the battlefield. The Christian man, in order that he may win for Christ the souls of others, may make known Christ's Truth, may establish Christ's Church on fresh ground, is quite as ready to suffer or die as is the boldest member of the most renowned regiment.

To do this he disentangles himself as much as he can from all other ambitions and aims, "for he that wars, entangles not himself with the affairs of this life." With a good soldier of Christ the master passion is to spread the Gospel, to save souls from perishing--and he would sooner do this and be poor than be rich and neglect it. He would sooner be useful and live unknown than rank among the great ones of the earth and be useless to his Lord. A truly good soldier of Jesus Christ knows nothing about difficulties except as things to be surmounted. If his Master bids him perform exploits too hard for him, he draws upon the resources of Omnipotence, and achieves impossibilities.

Wellington sent word to his troops one night, "Ciudad Rodrigo must be taken tonight." And what do you think was the commentary of the British soldiers appointed for the attack? "Then," said they all, "we will do it." So when our great Captain sends round, as He does to us, the Word of command, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," if we were all good soldiers of the Cross, we should say at once, "We will do it." However hard the task, since God Himself is with us to be our Captain, and Jesus the Priest of the Most High is with us to sound the trumpet, we will do it in Jehovah's name. May such dauntless resolution fire your breasts, my Brothers and Sisters, and may you thus prove yourselves "good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

The passion for victory with the soldier often makes him forget everything else. Before the battle of Waterloo, Pic-ton had had two of

his ribs smashed in at Quartre Bras, but he concealed this serious injury, and, though suffering intense agony, he rode at the head of his troops, and led one of the great charges which decided the fortunes of the day. He never left his post, but rode on till a ball crushed in his skull and penetrated to his brain. Then in the hot fight the hero fell. How few among us could thus endure hardness for Jesus? O that we felt we could suffer anything sooner than be turned aside from accomplishing our lifework for Him we love!

In that same battle one of our lieutenants, in the early part of the day, had his left forearm broken by a shot. He could not, therefore, hold the reins in his hand, but he seized them with his mouth and fought on till another shot broke the upper part of the arm to splinters, and it had to be amputated. But within two days there he was, with his arm still bleeding, and the wound all raw, riding at the head of his division. Brave things have been done among the soldiers of our country--O that such brave things were common among the armed men of the Church militant!

Would to God that in the teeth of suffering we could all persevere in living the holy life He bids us live, and in zealously spreading abroad that glorious Gospel which has saved our souls and which will save the souls of others. Great

Master, by Your own example inspire us with this valor! I desire to see in this, our Beloved Church, more of you who are resolved that Christ's Gospel shall conquer this South of London. That it shall conquer the world! That Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. I long to witness more of that dogged perseverance among Christians which would make them work on and on, even without success, and persevere under every discouragement, until at last their Master shall give them their reward on earth, or else take them away to their

reward in Heaven. To be a good soldier of Jesus Christ there must be a passion for victory, an insatiable greed for setting up the Throne of Jesus in the souls of men.

Fourthly, a good soldier is very brave at a charge. When the time comes and the orders are given for the good soldier to advance to the attack, he does not wish himself away. Though a perfect hail of hurtling shot whistles all around, and the ranks of the army are thinned, he is glad to be there--for he feels the stern joy that flushes the face in the light of battle--and he only wants to be within arm's length of the foe and to come to close quarters with him. So is it with the genuine Christian when his heart is right with God. If he is bid to advance, let the danger be what it may, he feels he is honored by having such a service allotted to him.

But are we all such? I fear not. How many of us are silent about Jesus Christ in private conversation? How little do we show forth our light before men. If we were good soldiers, such as we ought to be, we should select every favorable opportunity in private as well as in public communion with our fellow men, and prudently but yet zealously press the claims of Jesus Christ and His Gospel upon them. Oh, do this, Beloved, and good will come of it! We should each one be seeking to have his own special work for Jesus, and if no one else were attempting the task, we should, like the brave men who rush in to the storming of a battery, carry the flag first and plant it, knowing that there are hundreds of others who will follow the first brave man, who might not be able perhaps to lead the way themselves.

My Beloved, may you and I be ready for anything, and bold to bear witness for Christ before a scoffing world. In the pulpits where we preach, in the workshops where we labor, in the markets where we trade, in every company amidst which we are called to move--wherever we may

be, may we be brave enough to own our Lord and to uphold His cause. But this is not all that goes to make a good soldier. A good soldier is like a rock under attack. So British soldiers have been. They have stood in solid squares against the enemies' cavalry until their foes have dashed upon them madly, gnashed their teeth, fired in their faces, thrown their guns at them, and yet might just as well have ridden against granite rocks. For our soldiers did not know how to yield, and would not retreat. As fast as one fell another filled up the gap, and there stood the square of iron defying the rush of the foe.

We want this kind of fixed, resolved, persevering godliness in our Churches, and we shall have it if we are good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Alas, too many are exhausted by the zeal at first exhibited. For a time they can reach the highest point, but to continue on, and on, and on--this is too difficult a task for them. How many young people will join the Church and for awhile seem very zealous and then grow cold! Alas, it is not always the young, there are some among yourselves who were once most diligent in your various forms of service. What hinders you that you are not diligent in your Master's business now? Has Christ given you leave to retire into inglorious ease? Does He exempt you from service?

Take heed lest you are also exempt from reward. No, we must through all our Christian life maintain our integrity, resist temptation, tread the separated path, and seek the souls of men with undying ardor--with indefatigable earnestness--wrestling with God for men and with men for God. Oh, for more of this stern determination to stand, and having done all--to still stand!

The last mark of a really good soldier of Jesus Christ is that he derives his strength from on High. This has been true even of some common soldiers, for religious men, when they have sought strength from

God, have been all the braver in the day of conflict. I like the story of Frederick the Great. When he overheard his favorite general engaged in prayer, and was about to utter a sneering remark, the fine old man, who never feared a foe, and did not even fear his majesty's jest, said, "Your Majesty, I have just been asking aid from your Majesty's great Ally." He had been waiting upon God.

This is how Christians get the victory. They seek it from the Church's great Ally, and then go to the conflict sure that they shall win the day. He is the best Christian who is the best intercessor. He shall do the most who shall pray the best. In the battle of Salamanca, when Wellington bade one of his officers advance with his troops and occupy a gap which the Duke perceived in the lines of the French, the general rode up to him, and said, "My lord, I will do the work, but first give me a grasp of that conquering right hand of yours." He received a hearty grip, and away he rode to the deadly encounter.

Often has my soul said to her Captain, "My Lord, I will do that work if You will give me a grip of Your conquering right hand." Oh, what power it puts into a man when he gets a grip of Christ, and Christ gets a grip of him! Fellowship with Christ is the fountain of the Church's strength. Her power did never lie in her wealth, nor in the eloquence of her preachers, nor in anything that comes of man. The strength of the Church is Divine, and if she fails to draw strength from the Everlasting Hills, she becomes weak as water. Good soldiers of Jesus Christ, watch unto prayer, "praying in the Holy Spirit," for so shall you be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

II. Thus I have in a very poor way described a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Give me a few minutes while I EXHORT YOU TO BE SUCH. And, mark you, I shall speak especially to the members of this Christian Church.

I exhort you, dear Brethren, who are soldiers of Christ, to be good

soldiers, because many of you have been so. Paul was likely to commend the Churches when he could, and I feel I may honestly and from my heart commend many of you, for you have served your Lord and Master well. I know you have nothing whereof to glory, for when you have done all, you are unprofitable servants. But still I rejoice, and will rejoice when I see the work of the Holy Spirit in you. And I will venture to say that I have seen here instances of Apostolic ardor and self-sacrifice such as I have read of in ancient records, but hardly ever expected to see. There are those in this House this day who will shine as stars forever and ever, for they have turned many to righteousness. Dishonor not your past, I beseech you! Fall not from your high standing. "Forward" is your motto! Never think of declining, but rather advance in love to God, and in the ardor of your zeal.

Be good soldiers still, and depart not from your first love. I am sure there is greater need of good soldiering now than ever. Ten years ago, or sixteen years ago, when first I addressed you, the power of popery in this land was nothing compared to what it is now. In those days the Church of England was more generally Protestant. Now it is so frequently popish that I may broadly say that now we are afflicted with two popish churches--that of Rome and that of Oxford. The second one is not one whit better than the first--only more crafty and insidious--inasmuch as it attracts to itself a number of godly and gracious men who protect the villains who bear a Protestant name and who are doing the Pope's work.

I grieve to know that the evangelical clergy of England, by their continued union with the Church of England are acting as a shield to the ritualistic or popish party, and giving them every opportunity to work out their schemes for leading the nation back to popery en masse. Around this very spot a battle will have to be fought between the

Sacramen-tarians and the lovers of the Gospel. At your very doors the battle is come at last. It was not so till but lately, but here it is--and you that are men must show your colors, and serve your Master against innumerable and constantly active foes. You have never failed me, you have always been bold and steadfast, and laborious, and so let it be, for the time requires it.

I can see on all hands that many of you young men are being attracted by the worldly amusements which surround us, for our dangers are not only those of popery, but those of the world, the flesh, and the devil. There must be greater earnestness and a deeper piety among you, or the next generation will become unworthy of yourselves--your grief--and not your joy. I pray you see to this. Be good soldiers, for much depends upon it. Your country will be blessed in proportion as you are earnest. Nonconformity in England will lose all its power if it loses its godliness. I do not care much for our political strength--I was about to say I am almost indifferent to our political rights--I care for them, but only so much as to occupy a very minor place in my consideration.

Our spirituality is the main matter. It is this, alone, that can make us a blessing to our country. Sons of the Puritans, you must walk with God, or your day is past--you will be swept away as Esther would have been, who came to the kingdom for the salvation of her nation--if she had not fulfilled the office for which God had exalted her. You have grown in numbers, grown in strength. O that you may grow in Grace, love the Gospel better, and love Christ better, for your country needs it, your children need it, you, yourselves need it! The times are perilous, and yet they are hopeful! By their peril, and by their hopefulness, I beseech you, be good soldiers of Jesus Christ! Good soldiers we ought to be, for it is a grand old cause that is at stake. It is the kingdom

of God, it is the Church of Christ, it is the Word of God, the Truth, the doctrine of the Gospel, the crown of Jesus, that are all at stake.

I grant you that none shall ever shake the Throne of Jesus, for though "the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," yet shall His Throne be established. But we now speak according to the manner of men. God has been pleased to leave this matter to His Church, which is the pillar and ground of the Truth. Oh then! Stand up manfully, and fight earnestly when so much rests upon it! God grant that you may not be as the children of Ephraim, who being armed and carrying bows turned their backs in the day of battle.

I implore you, my Brethren, and mostly myself, to be good soldiers of Jesus when you consider the fame that has preceded you. A soldier, when he receives his colors, finds certain words embroidered on them to remind him of the former victories of the regiment in which he serves. Look at the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and see the long list of the triumphs of the faithful. Remember how Prophets and Apostles served God. Remember how martyrs joyfully laid down their lives. Look at the long line of the reformers and the confessors. Remember your martyred sires and covenanting fathers, and by the Grace of God I beseech you, walk not unworthy of your noble lineage.

Be good soldiers because of the victory which awaits you. Oh, it will be a grand thing to share in the ultimate triumph of Christ, for triumph He will! When all His soldiers shall come back from the war, and the King Himself at their head with the spoils of the victory. When they shall come back to the metropolitan city, to the ivory palaces of the great Captain. When the song is heard, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors." When the question shall be answered, "Who is the King of Glory?" by the reply, "The Lord

of Hosts, the Lord mighty in battle, He is the King of Glory," it will be a glorious thing to have shared the fight, for so surely you shall share the honors of that coronation day!

A crown is prepared for that head though it is now made to ache with care for the cause. There is a palm branch for that hand which now toils in the fight. There are silver sandals for those feet which have now to march over weary miles for Christ's sake. Honor and immortality not to be imagined till they are enjoyed await every faithful soldier of the Cross!

Besides, and lastly, if I want another argument to make you good soldiers, remember your Captain, the Captain whose wounded hands and pierced feet are tokens of His love to you. Redeemed from going down to the pit, what can you do sufficiently to show your gratitude? Assured of eternal Glory by-and-by, how can you sufficiently prove that you feel your indebtedness? Up, I pray you! By Him whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and yet were wet with tears--by Him on whose head are many crowns, and who yet wore the crown of thorns--by Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and yet bowed His head to death for you--resolve that to life's latest breath you will spend and be spent for His praise. The Lord grant that there may be many such in this Church--good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Two or three words and I will close. At this present time I contemplate exhorting you to engage in fresh efforts for Christ. I do not know that you are relaxing, neither have I complaints to make of any. But I would wish that we would commence with renewed vigor this day, if God so wills it. As I myself commence a new year of Sundays as to my own age, I desire to see a new era of greater exertion in the cause of Jesus Christ. And, in order that it may be successful, let not a single man or woman on the Church-roll be missing from his or her post in the

spiritual conflict.

It is a remarkable fact that on the eve of a great battle in the Peninsular War the officers read the muster-roll, and noted that "not a man was missing." They had all good stomach for the fight, and were all there. You that are in the Sunday school, you that distribute your tracts, you that preach in the streets--every man to his post! And if you have no post as yet, find one--let there not be one idler, not one single loiterer, for a single sluggard may mar the work. Then if we are to be successful let nothing divide us. The motto of one of our most famous regiments embroidered on their banner is, "Quis separavit." Who shall separate us?

We are but mortals, and, therefore, little jealousies may spring up. And among us there may be little causes of personal vexation, but brave warriors in the olden times who had fallen out have been known to come together on the eve of battle and say, "Come, let us be reconciled, we may die tomorrow. Besides, we join in common hatred of the foe and love to the king." Let your peace be unbroken, your union indissoluble, and God will bless you.

To help us to succeed now, let us lay down this one rule--let no low standard of work, or virtue, or spiritual attainment, content any one of us. Let us resolve to be as good Christians as can be found beneath the stars, as fond of Christ as human hearts can be, doing and giving as much for Christ as we can do or give consistently with other duties. Let us spare nothing, and keep back no part of the price. Let there be no Ananias and Sapphira among us, but all be as John, who loved his Lord. And Paul, who counted all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Next, let me say let the present moment be seized. I should like to saturate this district with a mass of tracts simply teaching the Gospel

and protesting against the bastard popery around us. Heaven and earth are being raised around us just now. Our poor are being bribed, the houses of our members are being systematically visited with the view of decoying them from our worship. We are told that a certain small building used by the Episcopal body is the parish Church, and we ought to attend it. I might far more truthfully assert this to be the Church of the parish by the choice of a far more numerous body, but I care not to make pretensions which prove nothing.

The true question is--do we follow Christ, and uphold the teachings of Scripture? If so, our standing is unassailable. Doubtless the word has gone forth that Dissent must be crushed, but if we live near to God, and maintain our zeal, Dissent will rise invincible from every attack. Foreseeing the gathering storm, it is our consolation that we know where He dwells who is Master of the tempest, and can walk the waters for our help, and calm the sea around the weather-beaten boat. It becomes us now at this present moment to be indefatigable, to put forth all our strength for the Truth of God, even the Lord's pure Word in doctrine and in ordinance.

Let no man's heart fail him. There is no fear of defeat. Lo, these many years the Lord of Hosts has been with us as a Church, and He will still be our Helper. We have seen the rise and fall of many who blazed for awhile--but are now quenched in darkness--while we have increased from a handful to this mass, and God who has been our trust, and is still our stay, will not forsake us now. He has not drawn you together, and held you in one body by cords of love, that after all you may prove to be a powerless unwieldy mass of associated Christians. He intends to direct and strengthen you for nobler ends and purposes!

God, even our own God, will bless us! Immanuel, God with us, leads the van. The Truth, like the virgin daughter of Zion, shakes her head at

boastful error, and laughs it to scorn. Let Falsehood put on her tawdry garments and think herself a queen, and say that she shall sit alone, and see no sorrow. Let Error come forth in her panoply and wave her flaunting banner before the sun. She draws near her end. Her armor--what is it? It is but pasteboard, and the lance of Truth shall pierce it through and through. Her banner, what is it but a foul rag of the Roman harlot? It shall be laid in the dust.

No, let Error bring forth all her hosts, and let them stand in their serried ranks, and through them the faithful soldiers of Jesus will ride and bow the columns like reeds in the wind. In these days, the doctrines and traditions of men compass us about, yes, like bees they compass us about, but in the name of the Lord will we destroy them. Only let us have confidence in God, and the victory is sure. As for the thought of turning back, that can never be endured. A message came to Sir Colin Campbell at the Alma, that Her Majesty's Guards were falling thick and fast beneath the shot, had they not better retire for a little while into safe quarters? The answer was, "It were better, Sir, that everyone of Her Majesty's Guards should lie dead on this battlefield than turn their backs on the enemy."

And it is so. Let us die, yes--it were to be devoutly wished rather than we lived a coward's life! Let the preacher first of all be carried to his grave. Let him never live to see the shame of this Israel. Let these eyes be sealed in death rather than behold "Ichabod" written on these walls! No, Brethren, it shall not be! You will serve Jesus, you will love Him, and "Onward to victory" shall be your watchword from today on. Be more in PRAYER--for this is the great matter. Seek out, each one, your own sphere of action--give yourselves wholly to it. And if any grow cold or careless, let him remember Jesus says, "I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I

will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

This blessed supping with Jesus will restore you! Though you are like Laodicea, "neither cold nor hot," fellowship with Jesus will renew the love of your espousals. Oh, then, my Brethren, in Jesus' name I bid you be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!

I have not preached to sinners, but you will do that if you catch the spirit of this sermon. There will be many thousands of words to sinners spoken as the result of this exhortation, if God, the Holy Spirit, makes it answer my design. Only this word to those who are not soldiers of Jesus Christ--trust Him now! Come now and kiss His silver scepter of Divine Grace. He will forgive the rebel, and take him to be His servant. God bless you. Amen.

Chapter 31

The Pilgrim's Grateful Recollections

(No. 939)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live. Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your foot swell, these forty years. You shall also consider in your heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him." Deuteronomy 8:3-6.

OUR aptness to forget God's mercies, is, alas, too conspicuous. It has been said that the annals of a prosperous and peaceful country are singularly uninteresting. Does this arise from the fact that we do not make memoranda of our mercies, or at least if we do, they are far more readily blotted out than the record of our sorrows? We trace our joys in the sand, but we write our afflictions on marble. We forget the streams of mercy, never ceasing, which flow so continually parallel with our pathway.

If we thus, ungratefully forget, it should cause us serious reflections when we see that God does not forget. Here in this Book He brings to His people's memories all the mercies they have received, because they were always present before His own mind. The child may forget the kindness of its mother, but the mother does not forget what she bore,

and what she has sacrificed for her child. The friend may forget what he has received, but it is not likely that the benefactor will forget what he has bestowed. If God's memory, therefore, records all that He has given me, let me be ashamed to let my memory suffer these things to slip. What God counts worthy of His Divine recollection let me record on the pages of my memory, and often let me peruse the record.

We are also far too slow to draw the inference of obligation from benefits received. We receive the blessing, but we do not always feel that a proportionate debt is due in return to God, the bounteous Giver of every good gift. Yet Divine Grace has its obligations as well as laws--obligations which honorable minds reckon to be among the first to be discharged. If I do not do what I ought because I fear the Law, at any rate let me prove that I am not so base as to be ungrateful to undeserved mercy and love.

It has been said by some, and there have been others whose lives have almost proved it, that the driving of the Law is more effectual to produce works than the sweet drawings of the Gospel. But it ought not to be so--and if it is so, the fault is in the man acted upon, and not in the principle of gratitude. For with right-minded men, with men educated by the Spirit of God, with men who are lifted up out of the common mass of mankind and endowed with the higher life, the highest motive that can be suggested even by infinite wisdom is the motive which is drawn from the transcendent love and Grace of God.

Now, Brethren, though we forget our obligations, it is clear from the text that God does not--for here, after giving a summary of His benefits--He concludes by drawing an inference with the word, "therefore," and He tells Israel that having received so much, they were bound to walk in His ways and in His fear--and to keep His Commandments. If He thus considers, whose wisdom none dare dispute, let

us voluntarily, cheerfully, and practically concede that such is the very Truth. And let us ask that He will help us to be obedient, and resolve that, receiving His help, we will say in our hearts and lives----

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

I shall now ask your attention to the list of favors given in the text, with the view of enforcing the Divine conclusions from them.

I. LET US PASS IN REVIEW THE FAVORS OF THE LORD, taking what He did for Israel as being typical of what He has done for us.

1. The first blessing mentioned in our text is that of humbling--"And He humbled them, and suffered them to hunger." Not very highly esteemed among men will this favor be. And at first, perhaps, it may be regarded by ourselves as being more of a judgment--one of the terrible things in righteousness--than a great favor from the Most High. But rightly judged, this is one of the most admirable proofs of the Lord's loving kindness, that He does not leave His people in their natural pride and obstinacy, but by acts of Grace brings them to their right mind.

Note in the text that the humbling was produced by hunger. What makes a man so humble as to be thoroughly in want? It was not hunger for luxury, merely--bread and water failed them. How could the soil beneath them of hot sand yield them a harvest? Where could they find a stream to slake their dreadful thirst which the broiling sun and the arid sand continually increased? To want bread and water is a short way of making a man feel that he is but a man, and that he is dependent, very dependent, upon the Providence of God.

Their hunger was, no doubt, increased in its power to humble them by their position. They were not hungry, in Goshen, nor in Canaan, but

hungry in a waste, howling wilderness, where, let them search as they would, they could find nothing available for sustenance. They were reduced to the most abject condition of spirit, and broken by the most urgent wants. And yet, I say, this was a great blessing to them, for, being humbled, they were put in a position where God could bless them. Speaking after the manner of men, there are some positions where God cannot bless us. If we are proud and lifted up, it is not consistent to the Divine honor and glory that He should smile upon us. But when we are laid low at the foot of the Throne, then there is an opportunity for God to come and deal with us in pity and Grace. It was good, therefore, for Israel to be placed where God's mercy could flow to them. Being there, and being hungry, there were opportunities given for Divine Grace and bounty. A man who is not hungry cannot be fed--why needs he, at any rate, to be fed? And if fed, he will not be grateful as a hungry man.

But now when they are famishing, now will God work His miracles. The open windows of Heaven shall, to their astonishment, rain down their daily food, and up through those open casements shall their praise and thankfulness ascend to the Throne of God. There is room for mercy where there is misery--space for Grace where there is poverty. Happy was Israel, therefore, to he humbled by hunger, and placed where mercy could glorify itself. They were thus, by their being made needy, brought to receive superior supplies. If they had possessed the corn of Egypt, they would have missed the manna of Heaven.

If beneath their feet there had sprung up crops of common wheat from which they could have reaped their daily supplies, they would have missed the angels' food which fell from Heaven around their camp. Absence of meals was more than compensated by the presence of manna. It is a blessed thing to have a famine of the creature, if thereby we are

supplied by the Creator!

Now, my dear Friends, just remember for a minute, that this was your case and mine. Years ago, in the case of some of us, the Lord met with us and brought us into a painful state of spiritual hunger. All our supplies failed us. We had thought before that time we were at feast as good as others, that we might somehow work our way to Heaven, and we were satisfied, after a fashion, with worldly joys. But the Lord suddenly took away our earthly comforts, or took away our rest and enjoyment of them, and at the same time we saw sin and its punishment before us--and we were brought to a condition in which we were like those in the wilderness, who were afflicted with fiery serpents, and bitten with scorpions.

Our thoughts would not suffer us to rest. Our sins plagued and tormented us. We looked round for comfort, and we could find none. We looked and looked again, and we only found fresh cause to despair. We were driven right away from self. What a mercy it was that we were so humbled, for then the Lord could reveal His love to us! What a blessing it was

that we were so wretched, for then there was room for Jesus to come with His pardoning blood, and the Holy Spirit to come with His Divine quickening, and the promise of the Father to come with all its fullness of Grace and Truth. And oh, how blessedly, being deprived of earthly consolations, were we supplied with heavenly ones!

Our self-confidence, what a blessing it was to lose it, for we had confidence in Christ instead of it! Our carnal security, happy were we to see it wither, for we had security in Christ given us in the place of it and our self-righteousness. Thrice happy was it for us that it was totally dried up, for now we come to drink water out of the living Rock of Christ Jesus, and He has become our joy, our song, and our

salvation. You remember well that humbling season--you have had such seasons since. You have been brought, since then, into great spiritual straits, when you found that all the supposed Grace which you had in store utterly failed you, even as the manna which the children of Israel unbelievingly tried to lay by in store--it bred worms and stank. You have been brought down to deep spiritual poverty, but that has been a great blessing to you, for each renewed season of soul poverty has been the prelude for a fresh season of Divine manifestation of Grace. When I find myself brought very low in spirit, and made to see the depravity of my heart, and to groan over my own weakness, I have learned to expect better things. I have been thankful for humblings because I have learned by experience that when I am emptied the Lord means to fill me. That when I am brought low it is only a preface to being lifted by the Divine Spirit.

Surely for these reasons we may reckon our humblings among the choicest favors of Heaven. And as here the humbling stands first in the text, so let it not be last in our song. As it is put here as the frontispiece to the volume of grateful remembrances, let it be prominent in our minds. "He humbled you, and caused you to hunger." Oh, blessed hour in which he prostrated my soul at His feet! Oh, happy season when He stripped me of what I thought my glory, but which were filthy rags! Oh, thrice memorable period when He wounded me with the arrows of conviction, when He slew me by the Law--for this was but a preparation for healing me with His touch of love, and making me alive with the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. The first mercy, then, is that of humbling the soul.

2. I shall have to notice, in the second place, the Divine feeding. We shall now see ourselves mirrored in the case of Israel as in a glass. "He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you." How sweetly

that follows, "suffered you to hunger, and fed you." The light close on the heels of the darkness. Is there a desponding soul here who has been suffered to hunger? "Blessed are you that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled." That "and" in the text is like a diamond rivet, none can ever take it out or break it. "He suffered you to hunger, and fed you." He who suffers you to hunger will be sure to feed you yet upon the bountiful provisions of His Grace. Be of good cheer, poor mourning

Soul.

Now let us notice what our spiritual food has been, Brethren. I said the first remark shall be, we have been fed spiritually every day. We have had day by day our souls' daily bread. As the manna fell daily, so has the food of our souls been given us from time to time by the power of the Spirit of God. Israel in the wilderness was always on the brink of starvation, yet never knew a want. There was nothing between the people's being starved except (and what a blessed exception!), except the Divine interposition. They could not go to their stores, and say, "Here are tons of food." They could not, as you may in going down the Thames, look at huge warehouses full of corn laid by in store.

No, no, there was not a halfpenny worth of store in the house of any Israelite as he went to bed, the whole place was bare, all was gone. There was nothing between them and being starved, I say, but the Divine faithfulness. This is precisely how I have lived, by His Grace, before the Lord ever since I have known Him. There has been nothing between my soul and falling from Grace except the Divine faithfulness--no, nothing whatever of past experience, or all the present knowledge that could have stood me in any place in the time of trial. Not a man among you has anything spiritually to depend upon but the daily interpositions of Covenant Grace.

Let the child of God remember this, and when he feels himself very weak in himself, and driven to his Lord in prayer, let him rejoice that he is just where God would have him be. When I am weak, then am I strong. When I have nothing, then have I all things. While I have nothing to depend upon of the old corn of the land, the manna will continually fall, and day by day my strength shall be renewed. Has that been your experience, dear Brothers and Sisters? If it has been, then everyday give a fresh song to God, who interposes between your soul and death. Yet though the manna came every day, it was always sufficient. I spoke of starvation, but Israel never had any reason even to think of it, for the provender which God sent was not limited so that any man could say, "It is not sufficient for me." What sufficed one man might not suffice another in ordinary food, but of the manna every man had enough. So to this day it has been in Grace with every Believer. God has given to you and to me, up till this hour, all the Grace we have needed, and though He has given us so much, there is as much more left in the infinite provision as if He had never drawn upon it. Go to the richest man's store, and take something out, and there is so much less remaining. But when the manna came from Heaven, there was just as much manna left after it had come as before. So the Grace of God is just as all-sufficient after you and I have received as it was at the first. The only stint the Israelite knew in the matter of the manna was the limit of his own capacity to receive. He might have as much as ever he could eat. And if we have not had more Grace, it has been our own fault. If we have not lived nearer to God, if we have not possessed more joy, or been more useful--we have not been straitened in our God--we have been straitened in our heart. We have had the provisions of His Grace day by day. We have had as much as we asked for, and often a great deal more. And we might have had as

much more as we would if we had but had larger desires and greater confidence in God. The Lord's name be praised for daily food in this wilderness, and for sufficient food.

The manna was a very mysterious thing. It is said in the text that it was food that they did not know, and which their fathers had not known. And, certainly, the Grace of God which has kept us to this day is a most mysterious power upon us. The worldling does not understand what it is to eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, and though we know what it is by sweet experience, we could not explain it. We have lived to this day upon the promises of God, upon the inflowing of the Divine Spirit into our souls, but we cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes.

Nor do our fathers after the flesh know. And though our sires, who have gone before us to Heaven, fed on the same food, yet it was to them mysterious as it is to us. Talk of wonders! The Christian man is the greatest wonder in the world! Speak of miracles! What is the Christian life but a continued miracle? A series of miracles, like links in a chain, one following the other--kept alive in the midst of death, and supported by a marvelous food--which the world knows nothing of. We are wonders unto many, and more so to ourselves.

Brethren, the manna came from Heaven, and here is the very marrow of the Truth of God as to what we have lived upon spiritually--we have lived upon heavenly food. If our supplies had depended on human ministry, they would have failed. If they had depended upon the mere reading of good books, there might be times when we could read to profit. But the everlasting well-springs of Divine love are not affected by our condition of body or of mind--the Grace and love that are treasured up in Christ Jesus come to us when creature cisterns are broken, and all the help of friends is unavailing.

From You, great God, from You we have derived the nutriment of our spiritual life, and it has always come in due season--up to this hour we have known no lack. You have made us hunger when we have looked to earth for supplies, but when we have turned to You our souls have been satisfied with marrow and fatness! Blessed be Your name forever-more!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, do endeavor to live more and more upon unseen things. Let your fellowship be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Look not to the granaries of Egypt. Stay not yourself on an arm of flesh. Israel in the wilderness had no granaries, they looked neither to Moab nor Ammon--they looked to Jehovah, and to Jehovah alone. And let it he so with you, and, assuredly, even in the time of famine, your spirit shall be satisfied.

The children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on the best food that ever fell to the lot of mortals. They did eat angels' food. Egypt and Assyria, with all their wealth, tasted not of bread which dropped from Heaven. But poor Israel in the howling wilderness was fed with royal dainties. Let the sons of earth be nourished as they may, and fattened like kings' sons, yet there are no faces that are so fair to look upon with holy joy and exultation as the faces of the men who feed on Christ Jesus who is the Bread that came down from Heaven.

There are none who are so blessed as those who live upon God Himself--for they have this for their surpassing excel-lence--that eating as they do this bread, they live forever. He that eats other bread derives temporary nourishment from it, but before long he dies. He who feeds on Christ feeds on immortal food, and more--he becomes immortal himself-- the food transforms the man. Matchless is the manna which comes from Heaven, for it makes us heavenly and bears us up to the Heaven from where it came!

They who live on Christ become like Christ. Being fed upon Him, they

become conformed unto His image, made meet to be partakers of the glory of God in Heaven. I wish I could speak so as to stir your hearts with gratitude, but the subject ought to do it without words of mine! And, sitting calmly here with Jordan sparkling before us, and Canaan hard by on the other shore, we are bound to remember all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us--and the food which up to this day has never failed us.

3. The third favor mentioned in the text, upon which we will pause awhile, is the remarkable raiment. "Your raiment waxed not old upon you." This has been interpreted by some to mean that they were able constantly to procure from the surrounding nations fresh changes of clothing. Others have said, and there is truth in the remark, that they had among them persons of great skill who were able to use the produce of the flocks and herds, so that they were not without clothes to supply their needs. Indeed, if that is all the meaning, it declares a great cause for thankfulness.

The tribes never became a ragged regiment--though always on the march they were always well dressed--their clothes waxed not old. But I am not among those who like to blot out every miracle from the Word of God. As the history of the children in the wilderness is altogether miraculous, and cannot be accounted for without the introduction of Divine interposition, it seems to me that it is as natural to expect their raiment to be miraculously given as to expect their food to be. And the run of the text, if it were read by an intelligent child without any prejudice, one way or the other, would suggest a miracle. It stands in the midst of miracles, and is one itself. "Your raiment waxed not old upon you." Certainly this was the old interpretation which the rabbis put upon it--that by a continuous miracle their clothes did not wear out for the whole space of forty years. Though

subject to the ordinary wear and tear incidental to traveling, yet their garments still continued to be as good at the end of forty years as they were when first they left the land of Egypt. I believe that to be what the text means. And how, spiritually it is the case with us. "Your garments waxed not old upon you."

Do you remember, Brethren, when first you put your garments on? I do well remember when first I discovered, as Adam did in the garden, that I was naked, and I hid myself. I tried then, as you did, to make a fig leaf covering for my-self--that would have waxed old soon enough--for the fig leaves of our own righteousness soon wither and decay. But I was pointed to the righteousness which God had prepared, even as Adam and Eve were pointed to the coats of skins which the Lord God had made ready for them. And then I put on the robe of Christ's righteousness which He had provided, and glory be to His name--that garment has not waxed old upon me yet!

Is it not so with you? You are not found naked this day. Perhaps you have been a Believer forty or fifty years, but that robe of Grace is ever new and evermore as fresh as at the first, and as suitable as at the beginning. All your nakedness is hidden from the face of God, and hidden from yourself, too. You can now rejoice in the Lord, and approach Him without fear. You do not want to hide yourself, but rather you wish to show yourself to God, and you say, "Search me, O God, and know my ways, try me, and know my heart." Our garment, then, which covers our nakedness, has not waxed

old.

But we have a garment for more than this, namely, to make us acceptable. Jacob put on his brother Esau's clothes, and he obtained the blessing of his father. We, too, have put on the garments of Christ, and have won the blessing. He who went into the feast and had

not on a wedding garment was cast out. The wedding garment which we wear today is the righteousness which Christ has worked out for us--which He works in us by His Spirit. Now, blessed be His name, that which we put on many years ago, has not waxed old yet--we are still accepted in the Beloved.

That robe has endured much wear and tear. What with our imperfections and sins, shortcomings and transgres-sions--if it had not been Divinely worked, it would have been worn out long ago. But blessed be His name, I know, and you know, that we are as acceptable to God this day, as we were when first we believed in Jesus. We are still dear children, still Beloved of the Lord, still heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus--our garment of acceptance has not waxed old.

Besides, we have the garment of consolation. Men put on their clothes to warm and comfort them, and how often have we wrapped ourselves about with the promises of God's Word--and with the doctrines of Revelation--and made garments of them to screen us from the cold blast of tribulation? These, also, have not waxed old. Glory be to God for those everlasting promises! When we were young we trusted in them, and when we are old and gray-headed we shall still find them to be fountains of consolation as clear, and true, and sure, and precious as ever they were. You cannot point me to a stale promise in all God's Book. Neither can you find me a worn-out doctrine.

The rabbis say that when the young Israelites grew older their clothes grew as they grew. I do not know how that was, but I do know that let us grow in mental stature as we may, the doctrines of the Gospel still are suitable for us. If

they were like milk to us when we were babes, they are strong meat to us when we become men. They always meet our needs and conditions, and thus we can joyfully say that the garment which covers our nakedness,

which adorns us before God, and affords us consolation, has not waxed old these forty years. Blessed be the name of the Most High for all this!

4. But we pass on again. The next blessing for which we ought to be grateful is that sustained personal strength. Our spiritual vigor has not decayed during our sojourn in the wilderness, for it is written, "Neither did your foot swell." A swollen foot is the common ailment of pilgrims in the desert. Much marching over hot sand soon makes the feet become swollen and puffed up, or else it hardens them, and some read this text, "Neither did your foot become callous." In neither way in Israel's case was the foot deformed, nor was walking rendered painful. For forty years the pilgrims footed it without pain, and though it was a weary land, yet their strength held out till they crossed the Jordan, and came into the promised rest. So it has been with us. Our foot has not swelled these forty years. In the way of perseverance we have been maintained and preserved. Personally I admire the Grace which has kept me in my course, though assailed by many, many fierce temptations, and exposed to great perils in my position. If I wonder, I dare say each one of you have to wonder, too. There have been scores of times since you made a profession, when your feet were almost gone, your steps had well near slipped, and yet your foot has not swollen. You are still on the way, in the way, and nearing the end of the way, kept consistent, kept in godliness, even until now.

What a blessing! Suppose you had been permitted to faint? Suppose you had been suffered to fall on the road, and had no longer held on your way? You know what the result must have been, for only to perseverance is the promise made. But God has helped you to hold on to this hour, and He will aid you even to the end. Up till now you have held on--have confidence--He will keep you still. Your foot has not swelled in

the way of perseverance.

Neither have you been lamed in the way of service. Perhaps you have been called to do much work for Christ, yet you have not grown tired of it, though sometimes tired in it. Still you have kept to your labor, and found help in it. If you were ever called to preach the Gospel, you would be compelled to see, even if you closed your eyes, how dependent you were upon God. Sunday after Sunday, and weekday after weekday, preaching still, having need to say something fresh continually, and often wondering where it will come from. The preacher is grateful that as yet his foot has not swollen.

You, too, have gone to your Sunday school, or you have held your position as a solitary testifier in the family, or you have served God as a missionary from door to door, and you have thought, "Surely, I shall come to the end of all I know, and all I can do," but you have not. Your foot has not swollen all these years, you have kept on in the way of service. So, too, your foot has not swollen in the way of faith. Such little faith you had at first, that you might well have thought it would all die out by now.

See a spark that floats in the sea, see a stone that hangs in the air, surely these must come to an end. The one must be extinguished, and the other must fall! But it has not been so. God has not quenched the smoking flax, nor broken the bruised reed. Still your foot has not swollen. You believe in Jesus yet, and notwithstanding your unbelief, your faith still can give forth the cry of a loving child, and say, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief."

In addition to all this, your foot has not swollen in the way of fellowship. You have walked with God, and you have not grown weary of the holy communion. Sometimes that walking with God has cost you much effort, much struggling with inward corruptions, much determination to

be clear from the customs and the ways of ungodly men. And you had long ago been tired had not you leaned on your Beloved. But you have leaned so much on Him that your foot has not swollen. You can still walk with Him, and hope to do so until you come to your journey's end--and sit down with Him forever and ever.

Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, your foot has not swollen in the way of joy. You were happy young men in Christ Jesus, and you are happy fathers now. You were happy young women when first you gave your heart to Christ, and you have grown to be matronly now, but you are as happy as in younger days. The novelty has not worn off, or rather one novelty has been succeeded by another--fresh discoveries have broken out upon you--and Jesus has still to you the dew of His youth. If the old light has passed away, yet the new light of a still brighter sun has come, and you are nearing the "sacred, high, eternal noon," where the Glory of God and of the Lamb shed splendor all around. He who walks with God shall never weary, though through all eternity he continues the hallowed march. For all this we give to God our thanks yet again.

5. Bear with me when I notice in the fifth place the memorable blessing of chastisement. I must call special attention to it because God does so in these words, "You shall also consider in your heart." That unswollen foot, and that unworn garment you need not so much value as this--for this you are specialty bid to consider--to meditate upon in your very heart. Your deepest thoughts are to be given to it, and, consequently, your highest praises. "Consider in your heart, that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you." My dear Friends, I speak as one of the most humble of God's servants, but I dare not withhold my testimony.

I can truly say of everything I have ever tasted in this world of God's mercy--and my path has been remarkably strewn with Divine loving

kindness. I feel more grateful to God for the bodily pain I have suffered, and for all the trials I have endured of many sorts, than I do for anything else except the gift of His dear Son. I am sure I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in Grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. In fact, I have for years looked upon my great prosperity as being sent as a test and trial of my Graces.

I regard it as the severest of ordeals which I must lay before God humbly, and ask for Grace to bear. But I have learned to regard affliction as being a sheltered nook in which I am more than usually screened from temptation, and in which I might expect to have the peculiar Presence of the Lord my God. I am not fearful of my ballast, but I am very anxious about my sail. Moreover, I have discovered that there is a sweetness in bitterness not to be found in honey--a safety with Christ in a storm which may be lost in a calm. I know not how to quite express my meaning, but even lowness of spirits and deep sadness have a peculiar charm within them which laughter may emulate in vain.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Now I think if I were to take the testimony of many Christian friends here, they would have to say much the same. So then, as you know all this, let me say nothing about it but just this-- ponder and consider much the gratitude you owe to God for His chastening rod. Dwell much in your heart upon what God evidently regards as one of His distinguishing blessings. Do not pass over slightly what God would have you consider. Count the Cross and the rod to be doubly worthy of your deepest thought. "Hear the rod and Him that has appointed it." Remember that whenever you are chastened you are not chastened as a slave-master smites his victim, nor as a judge orders the criminal to be lashed, but as a man chastens his son, so are you chastened.

Your chastisement is a sign of sonship, it is a token of love. It is intended for your good. Accept it, therefore, in the spirit of sonship, and "despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are corrected of Him." Remember that chastisement is an assured token of the Covenant relationship. It is the Lord your God that chastens you. If He were not your God He might let you alone. If He had not chosen you to be His own, He would not take such care of you. If He had not given Himself to be your Treasure, He might not be so diligent in weaning you from all other treasures. But because you are His He will withdraw your love away from this poor world.

Perhaps He will take one child after another from you, that all the love that was lavished on the child might flow towards Himself. Perhaps He will leave you a widow, that the love that ran in the channel of a husband may run altogether to Himself. Perhaps He will take away your riches, that the consolation you did derive from them may be all derived from Him. Perhaps He will smite you, and then lay you on His own bosom, faint and helpless, that you may derive a strength and a joy from fellowship, close, and near with Himself. A closeness which you would never have had if it had not been that these other joys were removed.

I have seen a little plant beneath an oak tree sheltered from the storm, and wind, and rain, and it felt pleased and happy to be so screened. But I have seen the woodman come with his axe and fell the oak, and the little plant has trembled with fear because its protection was removed. "Alas, for me," it said, "the hot sun will scorch me, the driving rain will drown me, and the fierce wind will tear me up by the roots." But instead of these dreadful results, the shelter being removed, the plant has breathed freer air, drank more of the dews of Heaven, received more of the light of the sun, and it has sprung up and

borne flowers which else had never bloomed, and seeds that never else had sown themselves in the soil.

Be glad when God thus visits you, when He takes away these overshadowing but dwarfing comforts to make you have a clear way between you and Heaven. So that heavenly gifts might come more plentifully to you. Bless God for chas-tenings! Let the sweetest note of your music be to Him that lays not the rod aside, but like a father chastens His children for their good.

II. Now our time is gone, but you must even be detained, for it is necessary to dwell upon the last thought, which is THE INFERENCE FROM ALL THIS. All this humbling, feeding, clothing, strengthening, chastening--what of it all? Why this--"therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him." If you have not shared in these blessings, I shall not speak with you, for the inference would not tell upon you.

But if in very deed and truth every line here describes to the letter your Christian career, then let these arguments have power with you. He has done thus much for you, will you not serve Him? Are you not His by a thousand bonds? Delivered out of deep distresses, supported under enormous burdens, forgiven heinous sins, saved with a great salvation--are you not now bound by every tie that can bind an honorable man to be obedient to the Lord your God? Take the model of the text. Let your obedience be universal. Keep the commandments of the Lord. Walk in His ways.

Set your heart to the Scriptures to find out what the Commandments are, and then, once knowing them, perform them at once. Settle it in your soul that you only want to know it is His will, and you will, by His Grace, neither question nor delay--but whatever He says unto you, you will do. Shut not your eyes to any part of His teaching. Be not

willfully blind where Christ would guide you with His Word. Let your obedience be entire. In nothing be rebellious. Let that obedience be careful. Does not the text say, "Keep the commandments," and does not the first verse say, "You shall observe to do"?

Keep it as though you kept a treasure, carefully putting your heart as a garrison round it. Observe it as they do who have some difficult art, and who watch each order of the teacher, and trace each different part of the process with observant eye, lest they fail in their art by missing any one little thing. Keep and observe. Be careful in your life. Be scrupulous. You serve a jealous God, be jealous of yourself.

Let your obedience be practical. The text says, "Walk in His ways." Carry your service of God into your daily life, into all the minutiae and details of it.

Do not have an unholy room in your house. Let the bedchamber, let the banqueting hall, let the place of conversation, the place of business--let every place be holiness unto your Gold. Walk in His ways. Whereas others walk up and down in the name of their god, and boast themselves in the idols wherein they trust, you walk in the name of Jehovah your God, and glory always to avow that you are a disciple of Jesus, God's dear Son--and let your obedience spring from principle, for the text says, "Walk in His ways, and fear Him."

Seek to have a sense of His Presence, such as holy spirits have in Heaven who view Him face to face. Remember He is everywhere. You are never absent from that Eye. Tremble, therefore, before Him with that sacred trembling which is consistent with holy faith. Serve Him with faith and trembling, knowing that be you who you may, He is infinite and you are finite. He is perfect and you are sinful, He is All in All and you are nothing at all. With this sacred, reverential, childlike fear pregnant within your spirit, you will be sure to walk practically

in obedience to Him.

I close by saving, we who have followed God's Word so far, and experienced the faithfulness of God so long, ought never to give way to unbelief. Your foot has not swollen, your garment has not waxed old these forty years--why will you then mistrust or be suspicious? If He meant to deceive you He would have left you long ago--

"He cannot have taught you To trust in His name, And thus far have brought you To put you to shame."

Go on! The present difficulty will melt like the past. Go on! The future mercy will be as sure as the mercies that have up to now come to you. Though winds and waves go over your head, and friends vanish from you, "trust in the Lord, and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and, verily, you shall be fed." The heavens and the earth may pass away, and rocks turn to rivers, and the sun turn to a coal, but the eternal promise never shall fail, and the heart of infinite love shall never change. "Be of good comfort, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

What encouragement all this gives to young Brethren who are setting out in the Christian life, or about to engage in the Christian ministry!

With that reflection I close. If your fathers, and your fellow Christians of elder years can say that their bread has been given them, and their supplies have been all-sufficient, then rest assured, my Brethren, you are entering upon a happy life, even if it is a tried and difficult one. For the Lord who has dealt so well with some of His people, gives in that fact a pledge that He will deal so with all.

Commit yourselves wholly to God. Give up all your powers to His service. Work for Him with all your hearts, and He will supply your needs.

Think not of this world's gain, but "seek first the kingdom of God and

His righteousness." Lay self in the dust, and let Christ be All in All. Live by the rule of Truth. Walk by the way of faith. Have confidence in God, and your path shall be as brightness, and your glory as a lamp that burns. Joined on earth to the hand of Christian soldiers, you shall, before long, be added to the countless host of the Church triumphant, who at this hour bear witness that God is faithful, and that His promise is sure.

O you who are not Believers, methinks your mouths must water this morning to come and join with God's Israel! And remember that simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ will bring you to be numbered with Israel. If you will but with your hearts accept Christ to be your Savior, then His people shall be your people, His God shall be your God. Where He dwells and His people dwell, you shall dwell. And if for awhile you are buried with Him, you shall arise again to live forever with Him in Heaven. May the Holy Spirit seal this on your hearts. Amen.

Chapter 32

The Winnowing Fan

(No. 940)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 10, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the Grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Hebrews 12:14,15.

WELL did the Apostle declare that the righteous scarcely are saved. It is no child's play to be a Christian. The Christian life is beyond the poet's meaning, real and earnest. The hills of difficulty which lie before us are no molehills, and the giants and dragons with which we must contend are no phantoms of a disordered brain. When we reach Heaven, what monuments of Grace we shall be, and how shall we throughout eternity emulate one another's praises, each one feeling himself to be the deepest debtor to Sovereign Grace!

It will be well for us to remember that the religion of Jesus Christ is not a matter of trifling, that the gaining of Heaven is not to be achieved by a few half-hearted efforts. And if we will at the same time remember that all-sufficient succor is prepared for us in the Covenant of Grace, we shall be in a right state of mind--resolute yet humble, leaning upon the merits of Christ and yet aiming after personal holiness. I trust that in my ministry I shall never keep back the doctrines of the Grace of God, but I am anxious at the same time with equal clearness to declare the doctrine that good works are necessary evidences of Grace.

I am persuaded that if self-righteousness is deadly, self-indulgence is ruinous. Rowland Hill said he had spent a large part of his life in battling with the white devil of Arminianism, but he would now fight the black devil of Antinomian-ism. I desire to maintain always a balance in my ministry, and while combating self-righteousness to war perpetually with loose living. Antinomianism is a black devil, indeed, a devil whose smutty fingers have defiled full many of the pure truths of our holy faith, and made even good men shy of receiving them. We, must remember that though we are saved by Grace, yet Grace does not stupefy us, but rather quickens us into action. And though salvation depends upon the merits of Christ, yet those who receive those merits receive with them a faith which produces holiness.

The text before us is so full of weighty matter, and my own heart is so full of solemn searching, that I despair of speaking to you all that the text has spoken to me. May the Holy Spirit, the Author of Sanctification, help me, and bless the Word to you. I beg you to notice that there are before us two living things to be followed and two things to be avoided.

I. There are in the text TWO THINGS TO BE FOLLOWED. The fourteenth verse tells us what they are. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." We are to follow peace and holiness. The two are consistent with each other and may be followed together. Peace is to be studied, but not such a peace as would lead us to violate holiness by conforming to the ways of unregenerate and impure men. We are only so far to yield for peace's sake as never to yield a principle. We are to be so far peaceful as never to be at peace with sin--peaceful with men, but contending earnestly against evil principles.

"Follow peace," but let the following of it be guarded by the other

precept, "holiness." With equal ardor we are to follow holiness. Some who have aimed at holiness have made the great mistake of supposing it is necessary to be morose, contentious, faultfinding and censorious with everybody else. Their holiness has consisted of negatives, protests, and oppositions for opposition's sake. Their religion mainly lies in contrarieties and singularities. To them the text offers this wise counsel, follow holiness, but also follow peace. Courtesy is not inconsistent with faithfulness. It is not necessary to be savage in order to be sanctified. A bitter spirit is a poor companion for a renewed heart.

Let your determination for principle be sweetened by tenderness towards your fellow men. Be resolute for the right, but be also gentle, pitiful, courteous. Consider the meekness as well as the boldness of Jesus. Follow peace, but not at the expense of holiness. Follow holiness, but do not needlessly endanger peace.

Having thus hinted at the connection between the two, and how the two together make up a complete character, let us now take them one by one. Follow peace, "peace with all" says the text--an amplification of the expression. Follow peace with all the Church. There should be no quarrels within the sacred enclosure which the electing love of God has made. You are one in the Divine choice, you are one by the Savior's purchase, you are one by the Spirit's calling, you have one Lord, one faith, one Baptism. You are on the way to one Heaven--see that you fall not out by the way. "Let brotherly love continue." Let each esteem others better than himself. Let each seek his brother's good to edification.

Let us by no means be divided in heart, for schisms grieve the Holy Spirit, destroy our comfort, weaken our graces, afford occasion for gainsayers, and bring a thousand ills upon us. Whereas in these evil

days the Church is so much divided into denominations, and sections, follow peace with all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Hold what you believe with firmness, for you are not to trifle with God's Truth. But wherever you see anything of Christ, there confess relationship, and act as a brother towards your Brother in Christ.

Follow peace with all, especially with your own relatives and friends at home. Call we that man a Christian who will not speak with his own brother? We may call him such, but such he cannot be. "If he loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" When we hear of strife between husband and wife, between brother and sister, between father and child, we are ashamed that the name of Christ should be connected with such unhallowed contentions. Instead of bidding such persons follow after holiness, I would speak to them as unto carnal, and bid them first bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Do not even publicans and sinners love their own relatives? Are they not often forgiving and gentle? How is it, then, that you, calling yourself a follower of Christ, allow enmity to reign in your spirit?

What are your gifts and worshipping while wrath rules within your bosom? What have you to do with worshipping God? Leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Follow peace with all your neighbors. A Christian man should not make himself hated by all around him, yet there are some who seem to fancy that they are true to their religion in proportion as they make themselves disagreeable.

Win your neighbors by your willingness to oblige. Disarm their opposition, if possible, by courtesy, by charitableness, by kindness. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto

all." Do not sow nettles, nor scatter thistle seeds, but let the peaceful honeysuckle and loving jasmine adorn your neighbor's dwelling with "peace be to this house." Let the peacefulness of your deportment shame those who delight in ill will and strife. And may the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace, always by all means.

"Follow peace with all," that is, even with persecutors. Believers in Paul's day were commanded not to resent the evil done to them. They were to render to no man evil for evil, but to follow that which is good, both among themselves and to all. They were put in prison, they were robbed, calumniated, and even cruelly tormented. And yet it is wonderful to observe in history how meekly they endured their afflictions. Scarcely in any case was a word uttered by them inconsistent with the gentleness of their Savior. Now and then a hot spirit would pronounce a fiery denunciation of the cruelties practiced against the followers of Jesus--but as a rule the saints were led like sheep to the slaughter--and suffered in all the glory of patient innocence. Here is the patience of the saints!

Even thus it should be at this day. We are to follow peace with the most infidel, the most superstitious, the most wicked, the most cruel. If they will fight, let the fighting be all on one side. Or if we take up any weapons, let the weapons be those of longsuffering and of love. Let us kill fire with fire, and by the flame of love overcome the flame of hatred. The anvil, after all, breaks the hammer, because it bears every stroke and returns none. So be it with the Christian. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

The text says, "Follow peace," and the word "follow" indicates a hunter in pursuit of his game. He tracks the footsteps of his prey. He follows it over hill and dale, by the edge of the precipice, over the dangerous

ridge, across the brook and along the river, through the wood and down the glen. Follow peace in this way. That is, do not merely be peaceful if nobody irritates you, but go out of your way to be peaceful--give up many things that you have a right to enjoy. The respect that is due to you, be willing to forego. In fine, yield all but Truth for peace's sake.

"Charity suffers long, and is kind." "Charity bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Often the Alpine hunter, when pursuing the chamois, will leap from crag to crag. He will wear out the live-long day. He will spend the night upon the mountain's cold brow, and then descend to the valleys. Then it is up again to the hills--as though he could never tire, and could never rest until he has found his prey. So perseveringly, with strong resolve to imitate your Lord and Master, follow peace with all.

Stand still awhile, my Brother, and let me warn you that you can not follow peace with yonder burden on your back. What is it? It is a mass of pride. You can not follow peace if you are proud. Proud men must raise strife by their pride. Even if they try to exhibit good nature, yet pride neutralizes all, and inevitably excites envy and opposition. Even God Himself never sees a proud man but He resolves to pull him down--it is a part of the very nature of all intelligent beings to be offended at pride--and to desire its fall.

What have you to be proud of? Has God given you riches? You are so much the deeper in His debt. Is that a thing to boast about? Has God given you talent? You are so much the more in danger of being led astray by your own presumption. Is your greater danger a cause for pride? If your position is higher, you have more responsibility. Think less of your height, and more of the responsibility which it involves. Walk humbly,

or you can not follow peace.

Nor can you follow peace whose heart is full of envy. It is true you have not the wealth of another--what would it profit you if he were as poor as yourself? It is true you have not the talent of another--in what respects would you be better if that man's gifts were taken from him? Why, Man, I will be bound to say, you have after all as much as you will make good use of, and if not, your brother's loss would not make you the richer. It is wrong to be proud, but it is equally wrong to be envious. An envious man is sure to see faults where they do not exist, and so he makes trouble.

Envy paints upon the diseased eyeballs of her victims the faults of others. The faults they see are rather in themselves than in others, yet they think they see them there. Lay aside your envy. Rejoice that another is happier and better than you are. Rejoice in his happiness--it is the way to increase your own. Rejoice in his goodness--it will make you better. If you would double your joy, enjoy another's joy, and thank God that he has it.

Nor can you follow peace, my dear Friend, you with the swift-moving tongue. It were not amiss that it moved so rapidly if it carried better burdens. But you are a tale-bearer among your Brethren. Your tongue speaks more than is true, and much more than is kind. If you perceive even a little offense in a Brother, how quick you are to spread it with exaggerations of your own! How can you follow peace till you have asked God to bridle your tongue?

What has an untamed, unruly tongue to do with peace? It is the great creator and fomenter of discord. More mischief is made by idle tittle-tattle than by downright malice. The mischief that men resolve to do is very small compared with what men and women incidentally do by mere thoughtless love of saying something. You shall not gossip, is a

commandment which lies in, "you shall not bear false witness," and is akin to, "you shall not kill." Follow peace with all, and restrain that busy and wicked member, which James calls a world of iniquity, that "sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire of Hell."

If we would follow peace we must gird our loins with the girdle of forbearance. We must resolve that as we will not give offense, so neither will we take offense--or if offense is felt--we must resolve to forgive. After sundown let us never harbor remembrance of an injury. As even the wasp's sting dies when the sun sets, so let our resentments pass away. Boundless is the forgiveness of Christ, so let our forgiveness be. Until seventy times seven, said Christ to Peter. We have not yet reached that, and if we have, let us begin another seventy times seven, for God has forgiven us countless numbers of offenses. If any tell us that this is to be mean-spirited, let us tell them it is to be Christ-like. And if they call the Master Mean-spirited, we of His household will be content to be called the same. After all, what is grander than patience? What a holy vengeance it is to heap coals of fire upon an adversary's head by returning kindness for malice? O you who are the people of God, remember that your name is men of peace, that your God is the God of peace, that your Savior is the Prince of peace, that the Gospel is the Gospel of peace, that the ministers are ambassadors of peace, that your heritage on earth is your Savior's legacy of peace, and that your Heaven is peace. "If it is possible, as much as lies in you live peaceably with all men." This is the winning post towards which you are to run. The crown of olive and not the wreath of laurel is to be your coveted prize.

The second object of pursuit is a still higher attainment--would God we had reached it. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." The

amplification of the term "holiness" is the solemn declaration, "without which no man shall see the Lord." Certain theologians are so averse to the preaching of practical holiness that they have tried to import into these words the idea of imputed righteousness. In imputed righteousness I glory, but it is not mentioned here. No, my Hearer, it is utterly impossible that the text should mean anything of the kind, because you will observe that we are to "follow" it, whatever it may be.

Now, we do not follow imputed righteousness, for as soon as we put our trust in Christ we are justified through His righteousness. It is not a Grace to be followed, it is a benefit possessed already by every Christian. This text deals with inward, personal holiness, and nothing else. Imputed holiness is a gross misuse of terms. It is not Scriptural, and it is a thorough perversion of this passage to force such a sense upon it. This is a holiness produced in us by the Holy Spirit, which we progressively manifest in our hearts and lives.

"Follow holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." I understand by this sentence, in the first place, that no person who is unholy can see or understand Christ the Lord, or God His Father. That is to say, he does not know who Christ is so as to have any real fellowship with Him. He may know His name, and know His history, and have some theoretical ideas of what the Redeemer did and is, but he cannot see with spiritual eyesight as holy men do. He cannot, in fact, discern the spiritual Character and teaching of the Lord.

But perhaps the great meaning lies in this--without holiness no man can see the Lord in Heaven at last. He will see Him on the Throne of Judgment--but he cannot see Him as his Friend--he cannot see Him in that beatific vision which is appointed for the sanctified. He cannot see Him so as to find joy and delight in the sight of Him. He will not

be able to enjoy eternal fellowship with God, he will not be permitted to enter Heaven--

"Those holy gates forever bar Pollution, sin, and shame. None can obtain admittance there But followers of the Lamb."

God is so holy that He never can have fellowship with unholy creatures. Heaven, the court of God, is so holy that never can unholy beings tread its hallowed pavement. An angel once became unholy, and from the battlements of Heaven he was hurled into the deeps of Hell. God willed to save His elect, but He would not bring them to Heaven until He had sanctified them. He, therefore, sent His Son to die, that from His wounded side might flow the purifying stream. Surely He who would not spare Satan, the bright archangel, will not admit polluted man to Heaven!

And He who put His Son to death to bring His own elect to Heaven, by purifying them from sin, will not bring any of us there if we remain unholy and submit not ourselves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the object of election-- "God has chosen us from the beginning that we should be holy." This is the very end of our calling. "He has called to virtue and holiness." "As He that has called you is holy, be you holy in all manner of conversation." This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He sanctifies the soul and purifies us day by day. This is the test of likeness to Christ, for it is in true holiness that we are conformed unto the image of God's dear Son. Unholy men cannot enter Heaven, it is impossible. Sooner might God die than unholiness live in His Presence.

Now, see, my dear Friends, the text says, "Follow holiness." Follow it, that is to say, you will not gain it by standing still. Nobody ever grew holy without consenting, desiring, and agonizing to be holy. Sin will grow without sowing, but holiness needs cultivation. Follow it, it will not run after you. You must pursue it with determination, with

eagerness, with long-continued perseverance, as a hunter pursues his prey. You have not yet gained all the holiness which you may have and ought to have.

You are in some respects holy, all of you who have believed, for you are sanctified and set apart by God the Father. You are also rendered holy, in some respects, by being dedicated to Christ and being consecrated as His servants. But you have need to follow the holiness which the Spirit of God works in you. And I do beseech you, beseeching most of all myself, listen to this word--"Follow holiness."

Ah, dear Friends, this is a very high and lofty text, and almost too high to be addressed to some professors. For some who bear the name of Christ have not even followed after morality yet, much less after holiness. Now, holiness is far be-

yond morality, and you cannot be holy while you are not even moral. I blush to confess that some professors are unchaste professors. Alas, even in this Church some have vexed us with uncleanness. I may not know who, in each particular case, may now be guilty of this sin, but such have been, such are, such will be, I fear, among the faithful.

They are men who can talk well about Christ, and yet who are living in secret indulgence of lewdness. Persons will dare to profess the religion of Christ who can enjoy a lascivious song and broad talk, who are given to what is softly styled imprudence, which is really impurity. Impure familiarities, glances, and sports are the commencement of actual crimes. Men and women who in any way injure their delicacy and modesty by insensible degrees, proceed to overt sin. All men wonder when a professor falls into foul sin, but they would not wonder if they knew how long the transgressor had gone to the verge of the precipice.

The wonder would be rather that the moth had not burnt its wings in the

candle long before. Oh, hate the very thoughts of uncleanness! Your members are members of Christ. Your bodies are to be raised in the image of Christ-- defile them not, but walk with the utmost purity as in the sight of the thrice holy God.

Alas, I must further confess that some professors are not yet even honest. Shall I talk with them about being holy, when in their trade they cheat, and misrepresent, and lie? Should we see so many religious bankrupts, so many names before the civil courts of religious knaves and scoundrels, if there were not good need to preach plain morality even in the visible Church of God? I do preach it, I dare not do otherwise, even at the risk of having it thrown in my teeth by the enemies of religion. How can I talk of holiness to those who are dishonest in trading? Shame upon you to couple God's name with your knaveries.

Get you, therefore, away! What have you to do with Christ? You are His crucifiers--you put Him to an open shame. I tell such even weeping, that they above all others are the enemies of the Cross of Christ!

Mournfully, I must go on and accuse some professors of being drunkards. There are still mingled with our Churches, even with our Nonconforming Churches, those who put but small restraints upon their animal appetites. They are overcharged with drunkenness in their parties and in secret. They talk like the disciples of Christ, and eat and drink like the followers of Epicures. Men given to wine cannot be filled with the Spirit!

What? Though they are not seen staggering in the streets, is their excess one whit the less sinful than that of the public drunkard? "You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and have been wanton; you have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter." Is not this living unto the flesh? And shall you not die? There are some, again, who have

not yet attained to be industrious. We have those in the Church who are shamefully idle, who if they could but live on the alms of the Church would never do anything for themselves, and how the Grace of God can live in a lazy man I know not.

If laziness is detestable to good men, much more must it be to God. "My Father works up to now, and I work," says Christ. You find no idleness among angels or saints, yet these men would eat other men's bread, and deserve to be put upon the rations appointed for such by the Apostle Paul, "If any will not work, neither let him eat."

Now if I have to speak of such sins as these that are common among ungodly men, well may my heart ache when I see them in the Church of God. I am wearied with the sins of professors, and sore vexed with their inconsistencies. I long to present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ, and lo, I see sin and folly in Israel. Achan troubles the camp. How can we talk of holiness to men who fall short even in morality? Holiness is better than morality, it includes it, it goes beyond it. Holiness affects the heart. Holiness respects the motive--holiness regards the whole nature of man. A moral man does not do wrong in act. A holy man hates the thought of doing wrong.

A moral man does not swear, but a holy man adores. A moral man would not commit outward sin. A holy man would not commit inward sin--and over that inward sin, if committed--he would pour forth floods of tears. I can hardly explain to you the word "holy," except by calling you to notice that it comes from the same Saxon root as the words "heal," "whole," and "all." A man who is made spiritually whole is a complete man, all the virtues are there. His heart is right as well as his outward acts. Heal, all, whole, wholly, holy, by these steps you reach the word. A holy man aims to be like God, complete in His Character, motives, and thoughts--renewed after the image of Him that

created Him in righteousness and true holiness.

Did not that word stagger you as I read the chapter this morning? Was not that a wonderful expression? "Partakers of His holiness"? That you and I should share in the holiness of God--is not this a lofty thing? And yet we must have no less than this, for without it we shall not see God. "This is a hard saying," says one, "you judge us too severely." Breth-

ren, I judge you not, it is God's Word that judges, and I pray you regard its infallible utterance--"Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

In the Greek there are no less than three negatives in this passage, as though it said, "No never, no man shall see the Lord." Is he a great preacher? Without holiness he may preach, and he may win souls, but he shall never see the Lord. Is he a great giver to the cause of God? Yes, very liberal, but without holiness he shall not see the Lord. "He said he believed in Jesus Christ, and he talked a great deal about inward experience." That may be, but without holiness, whoever he may be, he shall never see God face to face. There will be no exception made for any one of us, we must all go into that scale and be weighed there, and if we are devoid of holiness, much more if we are destitute of common morality, we shall never see the Lord.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this word shall never pass away. If we follow not after holiness, at the gates of Heaven we shall find ourselves repulsed. Hope as we may, and boast as we may--neither you nor I--without holiness, shall never get one joyful glimpse of God.

II. Thus have I spoken on the two things to be followed, and now, with the Holy Spirit's help, I will speak on the TWO THINGS TO BE AVOIDED. These are in the next verse--"Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the Grace of God." The first thing to be avoided is failure. Even those

who believe in the doctrine of falling from Grace have honestly conceded that this text does not mean that men may fall from the Grace of God, though the marginal reading might imply that. The Greek would not bear such a rendering.

There are some persons who for a time appear to possess the Grace of God, and for awhile exhibit many outward evidences of being Christians, but at last the temptations come that are most suitable to their depraved tastes, and they are carried away with it. They fail of the Grace of God. They appear to have gained it, but they fail at last--like a man in business who makes money for a time--but fails in the end. They fail of the Grace of God--like an arrow shot from the bow which goes straight towards the target for a time--but having too little impetus, fails to reach the mark.

There are some who did run well. What hinders them that they should not obey the Truth of God?--

"The apostate soul does tire and faint,
And walk the ways of God no more;
He is esteemed almost a saint,
Yet makes his own damnation sure." Perhaps a more dangerous way of failing of the Grace of God may be this. Some have maintained an admirable character to all appearance all their lives, and yet have failed of the Grace of God because of some secret sin. They persuaded even themselves that they were Believers, and yet they were not truly so. They had no inward holiness, they allowed one sin to get the mastery. They indulged in an unsanctified passion, and so, though they were laid in the grave like sheep, they died with a false hope, and missed eternal life. This is a most dreadful state to be in, and perhaps some of us are in it. Let the prayer be breathed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there

is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Are you earnest in secret prayer? Do you love the reading of the Bible? Have you the fear of God before your eyes? Do you really commune with God? Do you truly love Christ? Ask yourselves these questions often--for though we preach the free Gospel of Jesus Christ, I hope as plainly as any--we feel it to be just as necessary to set you on self-examination and to excite in you a holy anxiety. It ought to be often a question with you, "Have I the Grace of God, or do I fall short of it? Am I a piece of rock crystal which is very like the diamond, but yet is not diamond? Am I like that famous wheel we have all heard so much of lately which had been revolving on its axis so long, but which had an unseen flaw in it, and therefore at last on its journey it snapped and destroyed many lives? Am I just that? Have I been revolving for years in my profession, and shall I break down at last with the whole weight of my eternal interests to be thereby eternally ruined?

My dear Friends, listen earnestly to the text--it says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the Grace of God." The word is "episcopountes," a word which signifies overseeing, being true bishops, looking diligently as a man on the watchtower watches for the coming foe. See the sentry pace the rampart--he looks in one direction and he sees the brushwood stirred. He half thinks it is the foe, and suspects an ambush there. He looks to the front, across the sea, does he not discern a sail in the distance? The attack may be from the seaboard. He looks to the right, across the plain, and if even a little dust should move he watches lest the foe should be on foot.

So in the Church of God each one should be on his watchtower for himself and for others, watching diligently lest any man fail of the Grace of God. The first person who is likely to fail in this Church is myself. Each one ought to feel that. The beginning of the watch should

therefore be at home. Depend upon it, dear Friends, if there is anyone likely to fall into sin it is yourself. Though I say you, I mean myself as well. Each man is himself most in danger. If you say, "I do not think so," then there is the more reason that you should think so. If upon hearing of anyone falling into sin you have said, "I do not understand it, I know I never should have done so," it is very likely you will, before long, fall into the same or equally vile sin.

You are just the man. Those who think they stand are the men who fall. "If any man thinks he stands, let him take heed lest he fall." You who lie low on your faces before God in self-distrust, feeling your liability to err, and asking to be kept every day--you are the least likely to fall of any. But those who say as the Pharisees, "What fools others are to be led astray in that way, I am not one of them," they are fools themselves! God help you, when you are self-reliant, for your feet have almost gone, if not to any other sin, at all events in the direction of pride. And remember a man may as easily be damned by pride as by dishonesty.

Then, next, exercise watchfulness over others. How many persons might be saved from backsliding by a little oversight! If we would speak to the Brother kindly and considerately, when we think he is growing a little cold, we might restore him. We need not always speak directly to him by way of rebuke, but we may place a suggestive book in his way, or speak generally upon the subject. Love can invent many ways of warning a friend without making him angry. And a holy example will also prove a great rebuke to sin. The very presence of some men is a check and guide to others. In the Church we ought to bear one another's burden, and so fulfill the Law of Christ, exercising the office of bishops over one another, and watching diligently lest any man fail of the Grace of God.

The second thing to be avoided is uprising evil "lest any root of

bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." In the center of my lawn horseradishes will sprout up. After the smallest shower of rain it rises above the grass and proclaims its vitality. There was a garden there once, and this root maintains its old position. When the gardener cuts it down, it resolves to rise again. Now, if the gardener cannot get it quite out of the ground, it is his business constantly to cut it down. We are but men, and even when associated in Church fellowship, each one brings his own particular poisonous root, and there are sure to be bad roots in the ground. We are to watch diligently lest any of these bitter poisonous roots spring up, for if they do they will trouble us. Sin and error always bring sorrow and division, and thereby many are defiled. Sometimes the root is doctrinal error, and in these days there is a world of it. We must watch diligently lest doctrinal error springs up in our midst. I must confess I have very little charity for many of the errors of modern times, and can never degrade this Church by tolerating all sorts of views in it. If men choose errors let them form their own Churches. They have no right to thrust their views upon our community. There is a certain form of doctrine which we believe to be Scriptural, and if any members deviate from it, their first duty is to leave the Church when they can no longer agree with its belief. As long as I am pastor I shall have no controversy about doctrines which are our settled basis of association, but shall bid those who differ go where they can hold their own views in peace. If this should not prove successful, our duty will be to follow peace by extirpating the root of bitterness, and putting the Jonah overboard. Such a case never has occurred, and by God's Grace I trust never will. But if it should, the Church must not hesitate.

I am persuaded that doctrinal differences in a Church, by breeding the

spirit of contention, altogether prevent that Church from serving God aright. If we do not agree in the same Truth we had better separate. We must be one or we cannot be strong. While we hold one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, and are moved by the same spirit, we shall advance to the battle as one man, knit together in the bonds of holy unity. But when roots of bitterness spring up they must be cut down and kept down, or else ultimately they will bring defilement. Doctrinal error leads to practical error, and a Church which treats God's doctrine as nothing, will soon allow His precepts to be treated in the same way. And this would altogether defile the Church of God.

Another root of bitterness is when sin prevails in the Church. When they who preach the Gospel, or hold office in the Church, or are members of it, fall into gross and open sin, Hell laughs in derision. We should watch diligently against this. Again, I say, each man must watch himself most diligently, and his fellow next. Do, dear Friends, guard against the

beginning of sin. Rest assured, Christian professors never go into great sins on a sudden. There is first a neglect of private prayer, an indulgence in something which looks innocent but is not, and by degrees it comes to open sin.

We cannot, as professors, from the very force of our training and association, plunge into foul sin all of a sudden. It is by degrees that Satan entices us away from our steadfastness, and then at last we fall a prey to the foe. On your knees pray to God to crush the eggs of the old dragon before they are hatched. For if you are children of God and go into sin, it will cost you, I know not what. It may cost you sorrow to your grave. Poor David, poor David--up to the time of his great sin, what a grand singer he was! But if you read me one of the Psalms, I can tell you whether he wrote it before or after his

fall--for before that sad event his songs are jubilant and dance to the music of the timbrel--but afterwards his voice is hoarse, and bass notes preponderate, and you see traces of doubt and unbelief which never appeared before.

Beware of his sin lest you fall into his sorrow. And remember, sins which happened to some of God's people of old, who were truly God's people--if they happened to you would prove that you were not among the people of God at all. They were placed, many of them, in circumstances which, though they did not excuse the sin, yet somewhat accounted for it. You are not placed in such circumstances. You have more light given you and a clearer revelation of Christ, and therefore more is expected of you. And I tell you in God's sight, if you do not all strive after holiness, it is in vain for you to talk about faith in Christ, for there it stands and always must stand, "Be you holy, for I am holy." "Be you clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

The Son of Man not only came to seek the lost, but to save them, and that saying is explained by His very name. "They shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins," not IN their sins, but FROM their sins. Except we, as Believers, keep our Lord's Commandments and walk according to His will, we shall not be able to comfort ourselves even with the blood of Jesus. For Jesus never died to give us peace while we love sin and live in it. What says the Scripture, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." See to it, then, that only as we are walking in the light as He is in the light, can we have evidence that the blood has cleansed us from sin. God grant us Grace to feel the force of this.

If rightly moved by the Truths taught in this sermon we shall be very humble. When Isaiah had heard the seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy,"

while the posts of the doors moved, he said, "Woe is me! I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Do you not feel the same? Let humility prevail in your spirit. Let it rule in your heart more and more. Do not be afraid of being brought very low. You are never so safe as when you are low. Do not be afraid of having a very humble esteem of yourself.

I do not suppose any of us have in our most desponding moments ever grasped the desperate character of our own ruin by nature, and the terrible character of our personal sinfulness apart from Christ. You are undone. In your flesh there dwells no clean thing, and even your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. O child of God, get to the foot of the Cross and lie there. But what then? By all-conquering faith look up and say, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, my faith is fixed on Him. O You precious Lamb of God, like the publican I cry, 'Be merciful to me, a sinner,' renew me, cleanse me, purge me. I hate my sins, deliver me from their power, keep me that I sin not against You. Hold me up and I shall be safe. On the blood which cleanses I depend. O let it come to me in all its purifying, sanctifying, force--and make and keep me pure within!"

If there is in this house, today, any who have backslidden, I beg them to mourn, indeed, and put their trust in Jesus, and begin again. And if there is any professor, young or old, who ought not to be a professor, I ask him either to lay down his profession or make it real. Do not add to your sins this sin of pretending to be a Christian if you are not. Be honest. O do not wound Christ with unnecessary wounds. If you make no profession you will at least be free from the sin of hypocrisy. But I pray you do not sell your birthright for a little pottage. Do not let your God and Savior go for a little of this world's vanities.

May you choose Christ! May you lay hold on Him and be laid hold of by Him! And may you be kept by Him even to the end, that in the Last Great Day Jesus may say of you, "Here am I, and the children whom You have given Me." If you have never been converted, and have made no profession, still the text has a bearing upon you. Remember, without holiness you cannot see the Lord. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Faith in Jesus is the basis of holiness. God help you to begin at the Cross, and grant you His blessing from this time forth even forever. Amen.

Chapter 33

The Tender Pity of the Lord

(No. 941)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust." Psalm 103:13,14.

DAVID sang of the compassionate pity of our heavenly Father who will not always chide, nor keep His anger forever. He had proved in relation to Himself that the Lord is not easily provoked but is plenteous in mercy. Remembering how feeble and how frail we are, the Lord bears and forbears with His weak and sinful children and is gentle towards them as a nurse with her child. Although our own observation has proved this to be true, and our experience everyday goes to show how truthfully David sang, yet assuredly the clearest display of the patience and pity of God towards us may be seen in the life of Him in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Therefore, instead of speaking upon Providential patience, I shall bid you gaze upon God in Christ Jesus, and see there how human weaknesses and follies are pitied of the Lord. With a text from the Old Testament, I purpose to take you straight away to the New, and the tenderness and pity of the Father shall be illustrated by the meekness and lowliness of the Son towards His immediate disciples, the Apostles. While the Holy Spirit shows you thus the pity of Jesus Christ towards His own personal attendants, you will see as in a glass His pity towards you.

I. At the outset let us attentively and admiringly observe THE DIVINE

PATIENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS TOWARDS THE APOSTLES. I shall begin on this point by reminding you of their origin. Who, and what were these whom He received into intimate fellowship with Himself? They were not the high-born and powerful of the earth, for, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are chosen." Not a single nobleman was numbered with the Apostles. They were not even educated persons who, if poor, might still wear a gentle heart beneath a peasant's garb.

There was not a rabbi nor a philosopher among them. They were as uninstructed and as clownish as the rest of the peasantry of Palestine. He selected them from the populace. They were either fishermen or publicans--and these He made to be the first instruments of spreading abroad the Gospel and establishing His kingdom. For our Lord Christ, who had been accustomed to the thrones, and royalties of Heaven, to stoop to be the familiar companion of any of the sons of men would be wonderful condescension! But what shall I say when He elects the weak, and the poor, and the despised, to be His friends? He might have selected for His associates the choicest spirits, the advanced intellects, the educated minds, but, lo, He makes foolish the wisdom of this world, and chooses the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are.

I do not exaggerate when I speak of the clownishness of the Apostles--their dullness and their ignorance. They were very honest and sincere, but they were far from being naturally quick of understanding. It was intentionally that our Lord made choice of them, on purpose, to illustrate the sovereignty of election, and that no flesh should glory in His Presence. He resolved that when He had filled them with the Divine Spirit, and ordained them to be the chosen vessels to bear His name unto the Gentiles, none should ascribe their power to

themselves--but all the glory should evidently belong unto the Lord alone.

At the same time we must not forget that it must have caused the Lord Jesus much inconvenience and trouble to bear with such disciples. The refined spirit cannot be in continual contact with the coarse without enduring pain. Some may call such pain sentimental, but in so doing they only reveal their own ignorance, for, probably, no shocks are more severe, no wounds more smarting than those inflicted upon the delicate, the pure, the holy, the refined, by association with the groveling, the selfish, the sinful, the unspiritual. The glory of our Master's patience is this--that He did not betray even the slightest disgust or weariness of His poor friends.

Though He might have said to them, as well as to the multitude, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" yet He bore with them without repining, and only now and then gave them a rebuke. He never looked contemptuously upon them as His inferiors, though they were vastly so in all respects. He called them friends. He told them mysteries as if they could understand them, though often when He explained them to them they missed the inner meaning. He took them into His most retired haunts. He familiarized them with the garden and the Mount of Olives, where He was likely to seek His retirement.

He would even stay His prayers to teach them how to pray--there was nothing that He would not do for them. Just such as they were He accepted them, and resolved to train them for His service. Having once loved them, He loved them unto the end. He never made them feel a dread of His superiority, or shudder at the distance between their character and His own. He kept no register of their faults--He never rehearsed the list of their shortcomings--but, on the contrary, His main rebuke

was His own perfect example. And He always treated them as His friends and Brethren. Think of this, and you will see in Christ Jesus that, "like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

Much forbearance He had with their lack of understanding. The Apostles, before Pentecost, were very gross and un-spiritual in judgment. He Himself had to say to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken." Until the Holy Spirit came upon them, and made them quick of understanding, they were sorry dunces, dull scholars--even though the best of masters had become their Teacher. They did not understand the object of His mission. They fancied that He came to be a king, and they expected to receive crowns and dignities, and even began to quarrel over the division of the spoil--disputing as to which of them should be the greatest peer in the kingdom which they expected Him to establish.

He was thinking of suffering and death while they were dreaming of robes and coronets. The mother of Zebedee's children even asked for her sons that one might sit on His right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom--a gross misconception, indeed, of what that kingdom would be--and a piece of pride and selfishness that she should seek for her sons, probably with their acquiescence--a place above their fellow disciples. When He spoke to them concerning His sufferings, though He used great plainness of speech, yet they could not understand Him. Take this passage in the ninth of Luke, at the forty-third verse--"While they wondered, everyone, at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying."

The thought that the Son of God, the King of Israel should, by-and-by, be proclaimed king upon a felon's Cross could not by any means find place in their minds. They continued to cling tenaciously to the idea of earthly dominion. What strange ignorance was that which led them to think the Savior referred to their having no bread when He said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." Think, too, of the dullness of Philip when the Lord was speaking concerning the Father, and he said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us."

And Thomas was not much wiser when he said, "Lord, we know not where You go, and how can we know the way?" There were many truths which Christ did not clearly teach to them before the descent of the Spirit, for the reason which He once gave--"I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." Even when He made that simple statement, "A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father," they did not understand Him. And He said to them, "Do you enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me?"

The expression was so simple that they should have understood it, but their prejudices blinded their eyes. Nor was this confined to the early days of their fellowship with Him, for even after our Lord had risen from the tomb, those with whom He conversed on the road to Emmaus, who were probably by no means inferior to the rest, did not understand the references of the Prophets to Christ, and were not prepared to see in His Resurrection the manifest fulfillment of the words which had been spoken of old. Their eyes were held in more senses than one. Many a master would have grown weary of such pupils, but infinite love brought to its succor infinite patience, and He continued still to teach them though they were so slow to learn. "Like as a father pities his

children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him."

Reflect again, my Brethren, upon the unevangelical spirit which these Apostles often showed. On one occasion even John, as mild and gentle a spirit as any of them, asked to be permitted to call fire from Heaven to destroy certain Samaritans who would not receive the Savior because His face was set towards Jerusalem. Jesus, the friend of sinners, calling fire from Heaven? This might suit Elijah, but was not after the manner of the meek and lowly Prince of Peace. It would have been quite foreign to all His purposes, and contrary to His entire spirit. Yet the two sons of thunder would hurl lightning on their Master's foes!

He might well have spoken to them as bitterly as David did to the sons of Zeruiah, when in their hot rage they would have slain their leader's foolish foes. He might have said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zebedee?" But He merely said, "You know not what spirit you are of."

Read the ninth chapter of Luke, which is full of the failings of the disciples, and notice how John and the rest forbade the man who was casting out devils in Jesus' name. With the true spirit of bigoted monopoly that will not tolerate anything outside the pale of orthodoxy, they said, "We saw one casting out devils in Your name."

And instead of rejoicing that there were some beyond our company who were assisted by the Master's power, and were glorifying the Master's name, "we forbade him because he follows not with us." Their Lord, instead of angrily upbraiding their intolerance, gently chided them with the sentence, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." Remember, also, how the disciples put away the mothers of Israel when they brought their tender offspring to receive the Savior's blessing? This showed a very unevangelical spirit. They would not have their Lord interrupted by the cries of babes, and thought the children

too insignificant to be worthy of His consideration.

But, though our Lord was much displeased with the disciples, yet He only said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of Heaven." But, my Brethren, it must have required great patience for our dear Lord and Master, who Himself would not break a bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, to bear with these rough men who pushed the little ones on one side, who would gag the mouths of those who were doing good in their own way, and who would even call fire from Heaven upon poor ignorant sinners! Admire much His patience with their impatience, and see how, "Like as a father pities his children, so He pitied them," because He knew they feared Him in their hearts, and their faults were rather infirmities than rebellions.

Again, their weakness of faith must have been, in itself, a great provocation to Him, and yet He bore with it most meekly. When in the storm, on the lake, they ought not to have been afraid, because Jesus was with them, though asleep. But their alarm was so great that they must awaken Him, not thinking of His weariness which required rest in sleep. And they were so ungenerously unbelieving as to insinuate that He was unkindly thoughtless of their danger--"Master," said they, "do You not care that we perish?" Oh, what unbelief was here! He might well have been angry, but He rather rebuked the wind than they, and sweetly said, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Not many days after, however, they found themselves in a like case, and after such a deliverance, they ought to have been confident, but again they were troubled. Let us not upbraid them, for it has been our case full often. Jesus came to them in the midst of the storm, walking on the sea, and they were afraid of Him, and thought it was a spirit, and they cried out. Their faith was so feeble--it was scarcely faith, but

rather unbelief. Peter was a fair representative of them all when on that occasion he said, "If it is You, bid me come to You on the water." He had faith enough with venturous footstep to tread the wave, and to continue to do so until a more than usually boisterous gust made his heart tremble, and down he went. Jesus, as He caught him, tenderly said, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" No anger was in that fatherly rebuke. He spoke as a mother might, when, after teaching her child to walk, she saw its little feet give way and saved it from a fall.

Take another instance of their unbelief. Our Lord had fed the multitude, if you remember, with five loaves and two fishes, and but a short time after, another vast crowd was in a similar hungry condition. Jesus declared His compassion to the Apostles in much the same language as He had used previously--one would have thought that after seeing Him feed the five thousand so short a time before, they would have had no fear about the four thousand then to be fed, but would have said, "Lord, do as You did before. Here are our seven loaves and our few little fishes. If five loaves fed five thousand, surely you can feed four thousand with seven."

Instead of that they said, "Why should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?" Alas, for such unbelief! How could they doubt when with all their eyes they had seen what the Master could do? How could they be so unbelieving as to ask, "How can a man satisfy these men with bread here in this wilderness?" Surely the Savior must have been sorely put to it to bear with this. Moreover, they lost, by their unbelief, a large amount of power which they might have exercised for good--and they exposed their Master's name to derision. When He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He found a company gathered at the foot of the mountain who were

glorying over the baffled disciples, because they could not cast out a devil from a poor tormented child.

There were the reviling multitude, and there the disconcerted disciples. The Lord Jesus immediately rectified the mischief by casting out the devil, and when alone with the disciples He answered their question, "Why could not we cast him out?" How pityingly and encouragingly He replied, "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove therefore to yonder place. And it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Now, where unbelief not only makes the person fearful, but causes him to be weak where he should be strong--and to expose his Master's name and fame to doubt and distrust--it is enough to provoke anger in the holiest.

And yet the Master was not provoked, for He pitied His disciples as a father pities his children. Again, I would remark that it was not only in the earlier period of His communion that they were unbelieving. There might have been some excuse at that time, but even at the close of His sojourn with them they still remained doubters. Take Thomas as a case in point and hear him obstinately declare, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe." Yet our gentle Lord condescended to grant His incredulous disciple the tokens for which he had asked.

The rest of the Apostles do not seem to have been much stronger in faith, for when He appeared, "they were terrified and affrighted," and were not comforted even when He said, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." How gracious it was on His part, since they yet believed not, to eat before them all a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, to prove that He was yet alive and in a real body!

What? Had they seen Him three years? Had they beheld the miracles which He worked? Had they listened to His teaching and perceived the Divinity which dwelt within Him--and yet when He had risen from the dead, did they refuse to believe the testimony of the holy women and of Peter and John? Did they disbelieve the evidence of the empty tomb? Oh, yes! For unbelief, "as in them all, and they might each have cried, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief." Yet He put up with them and pitied them still.

Nor have I exhausted this matter. Their emulations of each other must very frequently have distressed the lowly mind of Jesus. Again and again we find them striving among themselves which should be the greatest. After James and John had so foolishly sought to sit on His right hand and on His left, the ten, it is said, had indignation against them, proving that if they did not show it in the same manner, yet they were actuated by much the same spirit as the sons of Zebedee. We find them again contending which should be the greatest when our Lord took a little child and set him in their midst, and said, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

As much as to say, "You need not choose places in the kingdom, and dispute as to precedence, you cannot even enter there while you are moved by the spirit of ambition. You must be humble, and become like this child before you can understand that kingdom." Perhaps the worst case of the Apostles' emulation is that recorded in Luke 22:24, when even after the blessed festival of love the apple of discord was thrown upon the table. Sad to think that at the Lord's Supper Satan should be so present. Extraordinary as it may seem, yet so it was. The question, "Lord, is it I?" was succeeded by the question which of them should be the greatest.

Their Lord was about to die. Gethsemane's sweat of agony was almost gathering on His brow. His passion was close at hand, and yet His disciples were taken up with so contemptible a question as which of them should take precedence of the other. That dear rebuke of washing their feet was a sweet way of reproving them and revealing His own love.

I must not forget that on some occasions they showed their pride in a very wrong and even insulting manner. Peter, who was, after all, but a type of the rest, when our Lord had spoken of His death, took Him and began to rebuke Him! Yes, he rebuked his Master!!! His Lord then turned Himself and rebuked the devil rather than Peter, though Peter had become the foolish instrument of the devil, and He said, "Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men." Nor was this the only occasion, for when He had warned Peter that he would deny Him that night, He was contradicted point blank by His rash follower, and his fellow disciples joined Peter in the contradiction.

"Likewise also said all the disciples." They were told to pray that they might not enter into temptation, but they were proud enough to believe that their Master did not know them and to think that no temptation could overcome them. Here was pride, indeed, and yet though those poor things who had needed to be humbled in the dust, spoke so exceeding proudly and lifted up their horn on high, yet all Jesus did was just pity them and to pray for them, and bear with their ignorance and their ill manners. Having loved them He pitied them, and remembered that they were but dust.

I will only mention one other matter, and that was His patience with their infirmities. I mean not only their sinless weaknesses, but those in which sin was in some degree present. Remember their weakness in the

garden? He was in agony, and He selected three of them to watch near the scene of His passion. But when, in the midst of His distress, He came to them, as if He would have a word of comfort from them, He found them sleeping. Oh, the pathos of those words, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" And such an hour--an hour of such extremity! Where was their love that they could sleep while He was in agony?

Yet how mild His language--"The spirit, truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." Worse than that, no sooner was He taken, than not one of all the band, so valiant in their own opinion, was found standing at his Master's side! Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. And the bravest of them all, in the hall where his Master was accused as a criminal, stood by the fire and warmed his hands, and said, "I know not the Man." And then with oaths and cursing, even a third time declared, "I know not what you say." Here was cowardly weakness, indeed, at which the Savior's resentment might well have been kindled. But He showed no anger, He only turned and looked at Peter.

And it was such a look of mingled sorrow and pity that the poor denier of his Lord went out and wept bitterly. When the Lord had risen from the dead, He did not upbraid Peter, but He sent a special love message to him, "Go, tell My disciples and Peter." And when Peter was with Him by the sea, the only rebuke, if rebuke it could be called, was the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" Asked a third time in remembrance of the three times in which he had denied Him, and that three times he might have the privilege of saying, "Yes, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

Beloved Friends, it is meet that I should add that the pain to our Lord arising from these faults must be estimated by His matchless Character and by the end He had in view. Remember He was perfectly holy as Man, and, moreover, He was God. And to have to bear with such poor creatures

as these was therefore the most wonderful condescension and pity. Engaged as He was in seeking their good, and not His own, it was the harder to endure that they should be such stubborn materials, and so great a hindrance to Him. Moreover, remember that He did not merely bear with them but treated them as His friends.

All things that He had heard of His Father He made known unto them. He admitted them into His most intimate acquaintanceship, and all the while almost His only rebuke to them was His own perfect example. He taught them humility by His humility. He taught them gentleness by His gentleness. He did not point out their defects in words. He did not dwell upon their errors--He rather let them see their own spots by His purity, their own defects by His perfection. Oh, the marvelous tenderness of Christ, who so paternally pitied them that feared Him!

II. Let us think for a short time of THE REASONS OF THIS DIVINE PATIENCE in the case of our Lord. Doubtless we must find the first reason in what He is. Our Lord was so greatly good that He could bear with poor frail humanity. When you and I cannot bear with other people it is because we are so weak ourselves. If you cannot bear with your imperfect brother, take it for certain that you are very imperfect yourself. Jesus was so free from selfishness that anything that they might do which was injurious to the honor due to Him did not afflict Him in the same way as our pride would afflict us.

All the suffering He would feel would be grief that they should be so erring, that they should have learned so slowly. He would not think of Himself, but would only think of them. Besides, He was so gentle, so tender! It was no exaggeration or egotism when He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." I would to God we could copy His love and borrow His "meekness so Divine." He bore with them and pitied them because of His relationship to them. He had loved them as He has loved many of us,

"from before the foundation of the world." He was their Shepherd, and He pitied the diseases of His flock.

He was their Savior, and He lamented the sins from which He was about to save them. He was their "Brother born for adversity," and He stooped to be familiar with their frailties. He had determined to bring many sons unto glory, and therefore, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured all things for the elects' sake.

Another reason for His patience was His intention to become perfect as the Captain of our salvation, through suffering. You have perhaps enquired, "Why did not the Lord Jesus at once perfectly sanctify these Apostles, and deliver them from sin? He might have done so." I grant you He might and I have often wondered why He does not do the same with us. But I do not wonder when I remember that it was necessary that He should become a faithful High Priest, touched with a feeling of our infirmities by being tempted in all points, like as we are.

Now, you and I have to bear with our imperfect brethren and if our Lord had never endured the same, He could not in that point have shown fellowship with us. In order that He might be a complete High Priest, and know all the temptations of all His servants, He bears with the infirmities and sins of disciples whom He could have perfected at once if He had willed, but whom He did not choose to perfect because He desired to reveal His tender pity towards them, and to obtain by experience complete likeness to His Brethren. Thus the High Priest of our profession became capable of sympathy with us in like condition, by having to bear with all the infirmities of His disciples.

Did He not also do this, my dear Friends, that He might honor the Holy Spirit? If Jesus had perfected the Apostles, they would not have seen so manifestly the Glory of the Holy Spirit. Until the Holy Spirit was come, what poor creatures the eleven were! But when the Holy Spirit was

given, what brave men, what heroes, how deeply instructed, how powerful in speech, how eminent in every virtue they became! It is the object of Jesus Christ to glorify the Spirit, even as it is the design of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ in our hearts.

Moreover, our Lord was considering the future of the Apostles, and therefore bore with them instead of removing all their evil. He knew that after His decease they would think of these things. And I can well conceive that in their solitude, and when they met each other, they would either soliloquize or say to each other, "Do you not remember how our Lord spoke to us on such an occasion? I do remember the very words He used." "Yes," says the other, blushing and with tears, "I do remember we did not understand Him." "And do you remember the question Philip put to Him?" "Yes," says the other, "but do you know I did not confess it, but I was just going to say the very same thing, for I was quite as foolish as Philip."

And then they would smile to themselves, and say, "How slow of understanding we were in those days!" "Yes," but the other would say, "Did you not notice that our blessed and ever dear Master never smiled contemptuously upon us, and never seemed wearied by our folly? He evidently looked at us as being little children, and He just explained Himself again and again. And when we did not comprehend He was still ready to explain once more. Oh, how tenderly He dealt with us!" And then one of them would say, "How often have I lamented that I fled that night when He was seized. I wish I had gone with Him right up to the judgment seat. I wish I had stood at the foot of the Cross or hung on another cross side by side with Him.

"But do you know when I met Him after His Resurrection, I thought He would have said a word, but there was never even a hint about my

cowardice. He received me with just the same tranquil love He had been likely to show before, and He sent me on an errand just as He had been likely to do, to show He could trust me still." Oh, what a dear and tender Lord He was! They did not know when He was alive how good He was, but when He was gone, and had given them the Spirit, they could see it all.

Just as with a photograph, when it is first taken the image is not yet visible to the eye, it has to be a little while in the bath, and to be washed before the artist brings it out. And so the picture of Christ on their hearts had to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and then it was revealed to them. And as they looked on it, they said, "Never was there such a One. He was, and is, the Chief among ten thousand, and our souls shall love Him even unto death." If it is so on earth it will be much more so in Heaven--when we enter within the pearly gate we shall see how Jesus loved us when we were on earth.

"I remember well," says one, "that trial which passed over me, and I said God has forgotten me, He will be mindful of me no more--and all the while He was afflicting me in very faithfulness, and in love to my soul." Then will another saint bear testimony, "Though I was very often cold of heart and forgot Him, yet He said unto me, 'Return unto Me, I am married unto you, says the Lord.' And when I did return I do remember how gently He received me and let out the full flood of His love into my soul once again! So that He restored unto me the love of my espousals, and I rejoiced in His salvation."

You see, the Lord is thinking of our eternity. He does not sanctify us at once, for we should not know all the sin that is in us, and therefore should not know how much we owe to Him. No, He leaves us these thirty, forty, fifty years in the wilderness that we may see what is in our hearts and what is in His heart as He manifests it towards us

in unfailing loving kindness. Blessed be His name, that thus He pities us even as a father does his children.

III. I shall now close, by indicating THE TEACHING TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS PATIENCE. Is it not this?-- First, if the Lord has thus had pity upon you as He had on His Apostles, do you even so to others. I know there is a tendency with us to feel so grieved with the inconsistencies of our fellow Christians as to lose patience. Moses, the most meek of men, yet lost his temper with Israel, and said, "Hear now, you rebels, must I fetch you water out of this rock?" I do not wonder that he called them rebels, for they were such.

But God would not have Moses call them so, for they were God's children. Their Father may call them what names He pleases, but He will not have the servants take liberties with the children. Sometimes when we see the inconsistencies of God's people, we are apt to speak harshly, but our Lord sets us a different example. Jesus bore with imperfect people, ought not you and I to do the same? Jesus must have borne a great deal more than we ever have borne or ever shall have to bear, yet He was still pitiful, still kind and loving to them--let us follow in His steps.

It ought to help us when we remember that we were converted through imperfect preachers. I am sure if any of you have been converted through my ministry, you have been converted through a very imperfect one. While I deeply regret my imperfections, yet in one since I glory in my infirmities, because the power of God does rest upon me. For what are we? We cannot turn any to righteousness--the Lord, alone, can do that! But, if by imperfect instruments you are blessed to the saving of your souls, you ought never again to be out of patience with imperfect people.

Remember, also, that you are imperfect yourself. You can see great

faults in others, but, my dear Brother, be sure to look in the looking glass every morning and you will see quite as many faults, or else your eyes are weak. If that looking glass were to show you your own heart you would never dare look again--I fear you would even break the glass. Old John Berridge, as odd as he was good, had a number of pictures of different ministers round his room, and he had a looking glass in a frame to match. He would often take his friend into the room and say, "That is Calvin, that is John Bun-yan," and when he took him up to the looking glass he would add, "and that is the devil." "Why," the friend would say, "it is myself." "Ah," said he, "there is a devil in us all."

Being so imperfect we ought not to condemn.

Remember, also, that if we are not patient and forbearing there is clear proof that we are more imperfect than we thought we were. Those who grow in Divine Grace grow in forbearance. He is but a mere babe in Grace who is evermore saying, "I cannot put up with such conduct from my brother." My dear Brother, you are bound even to wash the disciples' feet! If you know yourself, and were like your Master, you would have the charity which hopes all things and endures all things.

Remember that your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, with whom you find so much fault, are God's elect for all that, and if He chose them, why do you reject them? They are bought with Christ's blood, and if He thought them worth so much, why do you think so little of them?

Remember, too, that with all their badness there are some good points in them in which they excel you. They do not know so much, but perhaps they act better. It may be that they are more faulty in pride, but perhaps they excel you in generosity. Or if perhaps one man is a little quick in temper, yet he is more zealous than you. Look at the bright side of your Brother, and the black side of yourself, instead of reversing the order as many do. Remember there are points about every

Christian from which you may learn a lesson. Look to their excellences, and imitate them. Think, too, that small as the faith of some of your Brethren is, it will grow, and you do not know what it will grow to. Though they are now so sadly imperfect, yet if they are the Lord's people, think of what they will be one day!

O Brothers and Sisters, shall we know them? Shall we know ourselves when we once get to Heaven, and are made like our Lord? There, my Brother, though you are a quarrelsome man, I will not quarrel with you. I am going to live in Heaven with you, and I will keep out of your way till then. I will not find fault with you, my Friend, if I can help it, because you will be one day without fault before the Throne of God. If God will so soon remove your faults, why should I take note of them? I will not peevishly complain of the rough stone, for I see it is under the Great Artist's chisel, and I will tarry till I see the beauty which He brings out of it.

The drift of this lesson, is this--as your heavenly Father has pity on you, have pity on one another. He remembers that we are dust--remember this of others. You who live in the same house, do not fall out with each other. You, who are members of the same Church, do not criticize and judge each other so severely. Or if you are severe upon the fault, be gentle towards the person who commits it, and seek not his destruction, but his good. Preacher, mind you learn your own lesson--be as tender towards those who sin as the Master was.

Another lesson, and I have done. In your own case, my dear Friends, have firm faith in the gentleness and forbearance of Christ. You are conscious, this morning, that you have been slipping, and have fallen short or gone beyond the mark. And I know unbelief will now whisper to you that you cannot expect to enjoy renewed fellowship with Christ, or to taste His love again. O think not so! Think of how gentle He was

with the Apostles, and remember He is the same still. Change of place has not changed His Character. The exaltations of Heaven have not removed from Him the tenderness of His heart. He will accept you still. My Brother, I know that prayer of yours was not what it should be--try again. He will accept the prayer, despite the fault. I know, my dear Friend, your ministry up till now has not been so earnest as it should have been--but do not give it up. Preach again, preach with greater fervor and greater unction--He will bless you, He has not put you away. I know that with all of us there is nothing we have done but what we might weep a whole shower of tears over. But Jesus, the Pitiful, knows our meaning. He will not look at the flaws, but at the jewel. He will cover our sins with the mantle of His love, He will accept the will for the deed.

Let us try again. Let us trust in Him wholly, and devote ourselves unreservedly to His service. Let us be persuaded that as we accept from our children a poor fading nosegay on our birthday, and thank them as much as if it were pearls and diamonds, because it shows their love, even so if our heart loves Jesus, He will receive our poor imperfect service for our love's sake. "He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust." He knows we cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. He, in His infinite compassion will cover our transgressions and accept our heart's love. Be of good courage, then. Be of good courage, my Brethren, He will accept you still.

I should think this subject ought to attract many sinners to Him, and I pray it may, "for him that comes to Him He will in no wise cast out." O that the Holy Spirit would lead many of you to fix your hope on Jesus, the gentle Lamb of God. Come and trust Him, O Sinner. The Lord bless you. Amen.

Chapter 34

The Way

(No. 942)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 24, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus said unto him, I am the way." John 14:6.

THE most precious things lie in the smallest compass. Diamonds have much value in little space. Those Scriptural sayings which are fullest of meaning are many of them couched in the fewest words. Who shall measure the depth of that sentence, "God is love"? Or that other, "God is light"? Who shall know the lengths and breadths of this declaration, "Christ is all"? How clearly is the whole Gospel condensed into that line, "By Grace are you saved"! There are many more Divine Words of a like character, all short, and as sweet as they are short, precious beyond comparison, and as brief as precious. Our text, with its four words, and those all monosyllables, and none of more than three letters, is among the chief of these Bibles in miniature. "I am the way."

It were difficult, and it were as wicked as difficult, to be otherwise than simple in preaching such a text as this. May God grant that some of you may be reached by my simple testimony, and led in the way to Heaven. May those who are already in the way be strengthened, comforted, and quickened in it. And may God be glorified and sinners converted-- then our hearts shall be exceedingly glad.

I. We shall go at once to the text, and consider, in the first place, HOW JESUS CHRIST IS THE WAY, AND HOW HE COMES TO BE SO. How is He the way? A way supposes two points--from which and to which. Christ is the

way from man's ruin to the Father. Our Lord was speaking of man's coming to the Father, so we know where the way leads, and we know very well that the way were of no service unless it came to where we are by nature, and that is in the place of ruin and of wrath. Christ is the way that leads from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City--from the ruin of our father Adam right up to the glory of our Father who is in Heaven.

Christ is the way, then, first, from the guilt of sin to the Father.

The great difficulty was--How is sin to be put away? Many attempts have been made to remove it, but there is no way of our escaping from the guilt of sin except by Jesus Christ. Some have hoped for pardon by future good conduct, but as we all know, the payment of a future debt can by no means discharge a past debt. So even the perfect future obedience of man, could he achieve it, could not touch his past sins. Self-righteousness, therefore, even if it could reach perfection, would not be "the way."

Some hope much from the mercy of God, but the Law knows nothing of clearing the sinner of guilt by a Sovereign act of mercy--that cannot be done. For then God's Justice would be impugned, His Law would be virtually annulled. He will by no means clear the guilty. Every transgression must have its just recompense of reward so that the absolute mercy of God as such is not the way out of the guilt of sin. That mercy is blocked up by avenging Justice, and over the face of that star of hope called absolute mercy there passes an eclipsing shadow because God is righteous as well as gracious.

There is no way by which a sinner can escape from the guilt of sin but that which is revealed in Jesus Christ. God has sent forth His Son, His only Son. The Word was made flesh and came under the Law--upon that mysterious Being who combined both Godhead and manhood in one Person,

the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all. By imputation the transgressions of His elect have been laid upon their Covenant Head, so that He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many. He voluntarily undertook to be the Substitute and Covenant Surety of His chosen.

And in this way, by the transferring of sin from the sinner to Christ, the sinner ceases to be regarded as a sinner, and his guilt is removed. Here is the way for that sinner to approach the Father. His sin is laid upon Christ, who became the Substitute for all sinners that ever have believed or ever shall believe on Him. The whole mountain mass of the sins of Believers lies not on them any longer, but on Christ. He has taken their transgressions, He has borne their iniquities, their sins are moved from them and laid on Him.

Now listen! The only way in which sin can be taken from any one of us is by this method. It is not imputed unto us, it is imputed unto HIM.

But think not that the sin which was laid upon Christ of old lies upon Christ now. It does not, for the day came when the punishment for all that sin was demanded. The sword of vengeance awoke against human sin, and it would have destroyed all the flock, but the Shepherd came into the place of the flock, and He bore the strokes of the sword. And there upon yonder once accursed, but now forever blessed, tree, the Savior endured the fullness of Divine wrath on account of sin.

Now, where is the sin of His people? He has cast it into the depths of the sea. By bearing its punishment He has caused it no more to exist. It is as though it had never been. It is annihilated, it is gone! If it is searched for, it cannot be found. Jesus Christ, by His taking the sin and then discharging all the liability that was due to God from that sin, has forever finished transgression--mark the word--made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness for His people.

Now, Sinner, if you would get away from your sin, Christ is the way. This is the way by which you can escape from it. I have already told you that your future reformation cannot remove your past sins. Neither can the mercy of God, considered as an attribute by itself, clear you from your sin. But this wonderful deed of love and wisdom, this marvelous transaction that makes Heaven and earth ring with grateful songs when glorified spirits see further into it, and when angelic intellects are able to grasp it--this wondrous transaction can clear you from sin as it has cleared many of us. For we are this day before God justified, so that none can lay anything to our charge.

Sinners we are in ourselves, but not sinners before God's Judgment Seat, for Jesus has made us clean. We are whiter than snow, our sins being removed from us far as the east is from the west by our great atoning Substitute. Here is a way consistent with Divine Justice, a way exactly meeting what you need. Oh, I pray God that while the words are used, "I am the way," your spirit may say, "Blessed be His name, Jesus shall be my way. I will this day believe on Him and thus escape from my guilt."

The text refers to the guilt of sin, but then, "I am the way" is as true concerning the wrath of God on account of sin. You will see at once, and, therefore, I need not use many words about it, that the way to escape from wrath is to escape from the sin which causes the wrath. Remove the cause, you remove the effect. Now, when the sin of God's people was moved from them to Christ, the wrath of God went where the sin went, and it fell upon Christ, until He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

When that bitter cup of wrath had been drained to its dregs, it was emptied forever, and not one drop was left for a believing soul to taste. The wrath of God towards the Believer has ceased to be, and at

this moment there is no angry thought in God's heart towards a justified person. Whosoever has believed in Christ, his sins were laid on Christ, and punished in Christ, and God is not, and cannot be angry with the man for whom Jesus was a Substitute--for he has no sins for God to be angry with.

"Oh," you say, "but does he not sin?" He does, but it is not imputed to him, according to the saying of the Psalmist in the thirty-second Psalm--"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." He commits sin, but it is not imputed to him, and so the wrath never comes on him. He is free from guilt and wrath. God has love to him, unbounded love, and though He may chasten him, yet this is not in anger, but with purposes of love to him for his spiritual and everlasting good. So you see, Christ is the way out of Divine wrath as well as out of our sin.

And listen. There comes upon us in consequence of sin, when the Lord deals with us and makes us see sin, a deep and terrible depression of spirit. It is in some more and in some less, but in every case, "when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Sin, as soon as it is really felt in the soul to be sin, kills us, blasts our former hopes, crushes our pride, lays us like bruised and mangled things before the burning Throne of Justice. Oftentimes souls have been heard to cry, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger! Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness."

Many such expressions, it may be, you, my awakened Hearer, have been made to utter, but, oh, if you come to see that all this sin of yours is not yours, that in Christ Jesus God has put away your sins by your

Savior's bearing them and enduring their punishment, I say, if you see this, you will speedily rejoice! In a moment those waves of wrath will pass
away from you, and your spirit will sing, "Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." I know a truly awakened conscience never will believe in the pardon of sin without Atonement first made.

But when you hear that Atonement has been made, that Christ suffered instead of you, that His death has glorified the Justice of God more than your lying in Hell could have glorified Him--that His Atonement is to God's injured Law a better vindication than even your eternal destruction--do you not see it, do you not lay hold on it, and does not your heart leap at the sound of this glorious Gospel of the blessed God? Christ is the way, then, out of the guilt of your sin, out of the wrath of God for your sin, and out of your sense of that wrath.

But more, Christ is the way to escape from the power of sin. The great object of a penitent soul is to get away from the tyranny and slavery of evil habits and of corrupt desires. A man may break off some of his sins by his own unaided efforts. For instance, no man need be a drunkard, common determination may have done with those intoxicating cups. No man need be a swearer. Let him understand what a wantonness of iniquity there is in that sin, and he may surely give it up. Still, sin dwells in fallen creatures, and the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is evil, and that continually. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?

Man, your sinfulness is such that you can not cease from sin. But Man, there is a power above and beyond you which can deliver you from the power of sin and make you holy. It is found in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus as I have preached Him to you this day. Let me tell you my own

experience. Whenever I feel that I have sinned and desire to overcome that sin for the future, the devil at the same time comes to me and whispers, "How can you be a pardoned person and accepted with God while you sin in this way?" If I listen to this I drop into despondency, and if I continued in that state I should fall into despair, and should commit sin more frequently than before.

But God's Grace comes in and says to my soul, "You have sinned--but did not Jesus come to save sinners? You are not saved because you are righteous. For Christ died for the ungodly." And my faith says, "Though I have sinned, I have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and though I am guilty, yet by Grace I am saved, and I am a child of God, still." And what then? Why, then the tears begin to flow, and I say, "How could I ever sin against my God who is so good to me? Now I will overcome that sin," and, by His Grace, I get strong to fight with sin through the conviction that I am God's child.

Doubts and fears, and the thought that God is angry only drive you further into sin. But the faith, which in the teeth of sin still believes in God's love, and still believes in the perfect pardon Christ has given, which God Himself can never take back again--that holy faith which still clings to the Cross with, "If I perish I perish, but to this atoning Sacrifice I cling." That faith, I say, makes you strong against sin. The saints in Glory overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and there is no other way of overcoming.

The precious blood of Atonement, wherever sprinkled, kills sin, and he that lives in the full belief of it will be purified from sinful habits, as says that precious text--"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." It is walking under a sense of Divine love as manifest in Christ. It is walking with the full

conviction of pardon through the blood that brings to us freedom from the reigning power of sin. So, Soul, Jesus Christ is "the way" to escape from sin, its guilt, its wrath, its fear, its power.

Now we must have a word or two upon the other end of the way. I said it was from sin, to what? To the Father. Now the way to the Father is alone by Jesus Christ. We have for this the express saying of Christ--"No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." We hear talk of getting to God the Father by Nature, but it is a ladder too short to reach the Infinite. God is somewhat seen in His works, but I believe those who have seen the grandest works of God, and have also seen God in Christ, will tell you that God is no more mirrored in His works than is the whole universe in a dewdrop.

Earth is not broad enough to reflect the image of God. He does not mirror Himself in the sea--it is a glass too small to show the Deity.

He cannot reveal His whole Glory in the materialism of this poor world of ours--its axles would groan and crack beneath the weight of Deity.

It is in Christ that Jehovah reveals Himself more fully than in all Nature, though you summon sun, moon, and stars, and read all their hieroglyphs. God is revealed in Christ in a way in which He cannot be in anything of time or of space.

Learn, then, that we get our best apprehensions of the Father through the Son. "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." It is only by Christ that we realize the Fatherhood of God. I do not believe any man has any idea of what the Fatherhood of God is till he knows Jesus Christ as the First-Born among many Brethren, and knows the power of His

Atonement to bring us near to God. The common Fatherhood doctrine that God is the Father of us all because He made us all, is not true in the most real and tender sense of Fatherhood. A potter makes ten thousand

vessels, but he is not the father of one of them.

It is not everything that a man makes that he is the father of, or if he is so called, it is only in a modified sense. We are God's children when we are created anew in Christ Jesus--when regeneration has made us partakers of the Divine Nature. Sonship is no ordinary privilege common to all mankind--it is the high prerogative of the chosen. For what says the Scripture--"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not." When we are adopted into the Divine family, then, and not till then, do we know God as the Father.

As for unbelievers, they have not known the Father, for our Lord says, "O righteous Father, the world has not known You." He that has seen Christ has seen the Father, and only he. But the very Essence of Christ is seen in His expiatory death, and therefore we can never grasp the Fatherhood of God till we have believed in the Atonement of His Son. "Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father, but He that acknowledges the Son has the Father, also." May we, then, realize the Father through knowing in very deed the Lord, for to a knowledge of the Father He is the only way.

Again, Jesus is the way to conscious acceptance with the Father. I know, my dear troubled Friend, you feel this morning that you would give anything and everything if you could know that God had accepted you, and loved you, and that you were His dear child. Now, you can never know this until first you come to the Cross and see Jesus Christ dying there as a Substitute for you and for all who trust Him. You trust Him--your sins are on Him--you are clear.

The very next feeling of your soul will be, "I am not only pardoned in Christ, but I am accepted before God in Christ Jesus. For Christ's sake, and as one with Christ I am now dear to God. And what is very

marvelous, I am as dear to God as Jesus Christ Himself is! I am brought as near as Christ is! I am what Christ is, for He who was once my Representative in my sin, and bore the wrath for me, is now my Representative in His Glory, and has obtained favor and innumerable blessings for me."

This is a blessed thing. "The Father Himself loves you." "Made near by the blood of Christ." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like He. For we shall see Him as He is." The gift of Christ to us is a full proof of Divine love, and wherever it is received it is the proof of God's love to the receiver.

So, too, the way to have communion with the Father is the same. "Oh how I long to talk with God," says one. "He seems to be a long way off, and the thick darkness shuts Him out from me. O that I could speak with Him, even though the only word I said were that of the returning prodigal: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before You." Beloved, when you see Jesus Christ who bore your sins in His own body on the tree. When you see Him ascending up to Heaven you have access with boldness unto God, because Christ has entered within the veil and stands in the Presence of God for you.

You talk with God when you draw near in Jesus Christ. Your conviction that all your sin is put away through Him, that you are accepted through Him, that you live in Him as the member lives in the body, that He is your Covenant Head, and that His honors and glories are all reflected upon you--this assured belief brings you so near to God that as a man speaks with his friend, even so do you commune with Him. "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Again, we, by Jesus, come to resemble the Father. There is no way to

get the likeness of the Father except by learning God's love in the Person of His dear Son. Here, too, Christ is the way. You imitate Christ, and so become like the Father. You commune with Jesus Christ, and as you talk with Him, His Character sacredly operates upon yourself, and you are changed from glory to glory, as by the image of the Lord. I do believe, dear Brethren, that the moment we forget Christ, and then seek after personal sanctification, we are trying to get to our journey's end by declining to tread the road to it.

It is, at least I find it so, impossible to grow in Grace except by abiding evermore at the foot of the Cross. When I know by faith--not by any other evidence than by faith--that Jesus loved me, and gave Himself for me. When I see Grace, magnified in sin, laid on Him rather than on me. And when I see Justice magnified, in that sin being put away by Him--and when I see Grace and Justice together--clasping hands in solemn covenant to secure my soul against all fear of risk, then I feel that I am master over sin! Then I feel my soul loves God, yearns after God, mounts up to God--and

then it is she becomes more like God than she was before. So Christ is the way from sin, with all we can say of it, to the Father, with all the blessed things that flow from His Throne.

II. WHAT SORT OF WAY IS CHRIST, AND FOR WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE? First, let me say He is the King's highway, which means that He is the Divinely-appointed way from sin to the Father. If we came to you, dear Friends, who are seeking salvation, and told you of a way of mercy, you would naturally enquire, "Who said it was the way? Who appointed it?" And if we replied that it was appointed by the last council at Rome, I should not wonder if you felt serious doubts about the matter, and questioned whether a council of men could infallibly determine the way of Grace.

But I have to tell you this day that Jesus Christ is "the way" of God's appointment. Thus says the word--"Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." God the Father devised this plan of salvation by the transference of sin to Christ, and by the punishment of Christ the Substitute, instead of us.

It is clear to me that if God is satisfied with the way, I ought to be. If He, the aggrieved party, feels that Christ has finished the work and that He can now justly forgive us, why need we raise questions? O God, if You can look at Jesus and be well-pleased in Him, surely I can. If You are perfectly content with the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, surely I may be. Now, then, because it is the King's highway, (I recommend you, my Hearers, to be very clear here), if you are trusting in Christ who is the way of Divine appointment, if He were to fail you, which He cannot do, the blame would not lie with you, but with Him who appointed Him. I speak reverently. But He has appointed a way which cannot fail, for He is Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Power.

Then, as the King's highway it is an open way, I can come to it and need ask no man's leave. If I am treading the King's highway I cannot be a trespasser there. Poor Sinner, Christ is the way from your sin to God, and you need ask nobody's leave to come to God through Jesus Christ. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." "Him that comes to Me," He said, "I will in no wise cast out." Come and welcome! God appoints the way, and when He appoints the way, He puts it thus in 1 John 2:21, "And He is the propitiation for our

sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"--in order that any sinner in the whole world who wills to come to the Father by Christ may pluck up courage and perceive that his sins have been laid on Jesus.

Again, it is a perfect way. "I am the way." The way from sin to the Father by Christ is complete. It would not be complete unless it came down where you are, but it does. Where are you? Up to your throat in drunkenness? Where are you? Defiled by evil living? Soul, there is a road from where you are right up to the immaculate perfection of the Blessed Savior at God's right hand, and that road is CHRIST.

You have not to make a road to get to Christ--Christ comes to you where you are. The good Samaritan did not ask the wounded man to come to him and promise that then he would pour in the oil and wine. No, he came where he was and poured it in. Christ will come where you are. Saul of Tarsus did not go far to meet Christ. He was riding to the devil as fast as he could, but he was suddenly struck down, then and there where he was--and as he was--and Jesus spoke life to him.

He can do just the same with you. You think you have some preparations to make, some feelings to pass through, something or other to perform before you may believe that Christ has taken your sins. But all you can do to make yourself fit for Christ is to make yourself unfit. All your preparations are but foul lumber--put them all away. You must come as you are, as a sinner, for Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance--"the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

And if, as you are, you will come and take God's way, and trust Jesus with all your heart to save you, you will find He will prove to be the very Savior you need, for He is so perfect a road that there is nothing needed at the beginning. And nothing will be needed at the end. Some

have supposed that faith in the atoning sacrifice may carry us a certain way, and after that we must stand on another footing. God forbid I should say a single word against good works. Did I not the other Sunday morning address you from these words, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord"?

But good works are not the way to Heaven, in whole or in part. They are fruits of salvation. They are the sure products of those who are saved, but they do not save a man. A faith that produces no works will never save anybody. But that

which saves men is not the work which comes from the faith, but the faith itself, the faith in Jesus Christ. The top and bottom, the beginning and end of salvation, lies in the Redeemer, and not in us. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending," says the Lord.

If you think that you are to patch up Christ's robe of righteousness, or that Jesus is to begin and you are to complete, you know nothing of Christ, and need to be taught something of yourself. It must be all Christ or no Christ, all mercy or no mercy. Grace must lay the foundation, and Grace must put on the topstone, or else there can be no salvation. "I am the way," then, means that Christ is the way from where the sinner now is right up to where God is, and he that gets Christ shall come to the Father.

Christ is a free way. There is not a toll-bar at the entrance, nor anywhere along the road. Many are afraid to come into this road to Heaven because they cannot pay the charges--but there are no charges whatever! Whoever wills to have Christ may have Him for the taking. He that will pay for Christ cannot have Him at all. You may have Him for the asking. He is freely given. The way in which to have Christ is the way in which you have water, that is, by drinking. Receive Christ, for "unto as many has received Him, to them gave He power to become the

sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name."

There are no legal conditions of salvation laid down anywhere. I know it is sometimes said that repentance and faith are conditions--from one point of view, and in one aspect, I might tolerate the term--but truly and really there is no bargain made between God and a sinner. It is never you do this and I will do that. It is always, "I will do this for you, and then you shall believe and repent as the result." If faith, is, in one respect a condition, it is in another respect a gift of God, and though we are commanded to repent, yet Jesus is exalted on High to give repentance.

So you poor sinners who have no repentance, or anything of your own, I bid you come to Jesus Christ for everything. He is the way, and the whole way. This is a free way--nothing to pay, nothing to do, nothing to be, nothing to bring, no merits--no deserving, no preparations. It is all of Grace. All the gift of God to the very vilest of the vile.

Oh, it does sometimes seem too good to be true, that all for nothing I, a great sinner, shall be saved! But when I think of what the Savior is--that He is God--that He came from Heaven. That He became a Man for my sake. That He, the God-Man, Immanuel, was born and died, and bore the wrath of God--by His Grace I can believe it.

And, O my Lord, I dare no more add any of my driveling merits to the worth of Your dear Son than of stitching some foul, infected rags from a dunghill to a garment made of worked gold! How could I put any nothingness of mine, that only my folly calls anything, side by side with the ever-precious merits of Your dear Son?

Again, let me add, it is a permanent way. Jesus says, "I am the way--not a way for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, only, but for you. Not for the Apostles, and martyrs, and early saints, only, but for YOU--

"His precious blood shall never lose its power, Till all the ransomed

Church of God Are sa ved to sin no more."

It is a way that never has been broken up, and never will be. All the floods of all His people's sins have never made a swamp or bog-hole in this blessed way.

All the earthquakes and upheavals of our rebellious natures have never made a gap or chasm in this glorious way. Straight from the very gates of Hell, where the sinner is by nature, right up to the hilltops of Heaven, this glorious causeway runs in one unbroken line, and will, forever and forever, till every elect one shall be gathered safe into the eternal Home!

Let me add it is a joyful way. You noted in the chapter we read that the redeemed are to return with songs, and everlasting joy is to be upon their heads. All Believers in Christ as such are a happy and rejoicing people. "But," says one, "I have seen Believers mourn!" That is because they wander from the way. If they continued simply trusting in the Substitution of Christ, if they kept their eye on Him, and on Him only, they would know no sorrow. Where there is no sin there is no sorrow. And when the Believer knows that he has no sin--that it is put away in Christ--then he also has no sorrow. Then his peace is like a river, because his righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Dear Heart, if you would be happy, come unto Christ, and abide with Him!

Lastly, on this point, He is the only way. So is He the only way that you cannot be saved if you trust anywhere else. This way which God has planned of laying sin upon the Substitute, is such that it is the only possible way, and therefore

God will not have you insult His wisdom and His Grace by trying to patch up another. Do not try to find a way by your own feelings or your own works. There is no such way. All these supposed ways will end in disappointment and in ruin. Jesus Christ is the one foundation, build

on Him. God help you to say, "I will now cast myself flat upon Christ, having no confidence in myself. I will make Him my confidence, He shall be my All in All." If you have done that, you are a saved soul! Go your way and rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Thus we see what kind of way it is, but for what sort of people is it made? Hurriedly in these two or three words, I reply, for all sorts of people. Christ is the way to Heaven for anybody and everybody who is led to walk there. Christ is the way to Heaven for you, poor Wanderer, though you have sought the theater and music hall, and worse places, to drive away your melancholy. Come to Jesus, for He is the way to peace, the very way for a wanderer like you. Christ is the way for exiles, for banished ones, for those who have not seen the face of God for many a day, though once they rejoiced in Him. Backslider, if you would get back to your God, Christ is the way.

Christ is the way for captives. You, who bear your chains clanking about you today, who feel as if you never would be free--take heart, take heart--there is a way of escape yet, and Christ is that way! Make a desperate push for it, and say, "I will throw myself into His arms. If He reject me I shall be the first one. But I will go and rest on the bloody sacrifice of that dear Son of God who sweat great drops of blood because of my heavy sins, my heavy, heavy sins.

Christ is the way, let me add, for the poorest of the poor. Our Master, when He makes a feast, sends us out to bring in men from the highways and hedges, highwaymen and hedge birds--those who have not a house or a friend of their own. You who are lowest of the low and vilest of the vile! You who are all but in Hell, and are condemned already, you who lie at Hell's dark door bound in affliction and iron, shut out from mercy, as you think--Christ is the way for you!

For all who long to escape from sin. For all who would come to God. For

all who have a desire after mercy or eternal life. The great trumpet is blown, and may they come that are ready to perish, may the most needy and abject, and lost, and self-condemned, say, "I will come now and trust in Jesus who died the Just for the unjust to bring us to God."

III. The last point is, HOW WE MAKE CHRIST OUR WAY, AND WHETHER HE IS OUR WAY NOW. How do we make Christ our way? Why, as we make any other way our way. We hear a man say, "This is my way." How does he make that his way? Has he got the title-deeds of it? Has he a charter from his Majesty? No, nothing of the sort. The way in which I shall make the Clapham Road my way after I have done preaching is by getting into it.

And the way in which Christ becomes a sinner's way is simply by going to Christ. That is all. You have no legal rights, no forms or ceremonies to go through--you have but to come to the King's highway by trusting Christ, and Christ is yours. "But may I," says one, "without any warrant, come and trust Christ?" What warrant do you want? The only warrant is God's permission, and you have a great deal more than that--you have God's command--which is more than permission. He has said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

In believing you do what that Gospel warrants by its command. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," is God's Word! You certainly have a right to do what God commands you to do, so that your right to trust Christ lies in God's command. He says He will save you through what Christ has done. Will you believe Him? Will you believe Him so as to trust today in what Christ has done? If you do not, you make God a liar. If you do, you glorify God by believing His testimony, and you glorify His Son by trusting in His work--and you are saved.

Now, in order to keep the way your own, all you do is to continue in it. How do you keep any other way as your own? By any charter, by any fresh right that you had not at first? No, not at all. "This is my way," say I, as long as I still keep to that way. If I turn the other way I cannot say that it is my way, at least nobody would believe a way to be my way if I went in a contrary direction. If I leap over the hedge and go off in another direction and say, "This is my way," I lie. Man alive--that is your way which you go--your possession of the way lies in your keeping the way.

So now, Christian, Christ continues yours by the same way in which He became yours. That is by your still trusting Him, not by anything you do, or are by yourself, or in yourself. Because Jesus lives, you live also, not because of anything you do. "The just shall live by faith," not by any other means. You are not to begin in the Spirit and then be made perfect in the flesh. You are not to begin to walk by confidence in Christ and afterwards go on to walk by confidence in your own evidences and graces. Your evidences and graces will always shine best when you think the least of them, and always will be brightest with God when you look most at His dear Son, and not at them.

If you ever take your best virtues and sanctifications and make them a ground of hope, you are building on that which will crumble beneath you in the time of trial. But as long as you keep to this, "Still a sinner, but still washed in the blood. Still in myself guilty, but no guilt of mine imputed to me, all laid on my Substitute. Still my best prayers, my best hymns, my almsgivings, my preaching, my all--all defiled--but yet I am clean through Him that washes my feet and makes me clean in His most precious blood."

This is the way to live, the way to live evermore, not only as a beginner, but when you are advanced in Divine Grace--the way to live

when you are becoming a mature matron or veteran soldier, and the way when you come to die. It is especially, then, in those last moments, that we fling everything away but just what Christ has done. We might have been troubling ourselves a great deal before about marks, evidences, and so on, But when it comes to the last, we are like the good man who, on his dying bed, tried to pick out what was good and what was bad of his own doings. He said he was a long while judging them, but they were so much of a burden that he at last tied them all up in one bundle and flung them over, and rested on Christ alone. That is the very best thing for us all to do even now--

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus, Can do helpless sinners good." This will not make you unholy but holy. If you believe this, you will seek to honor and glorify God with all your might, and when you have done all, you will feel that you are unprofitable servants. And into His dear arms you will cast yourselves, and pray that the hands that were pierced may still embrace you and keep you safe in death and in eternity.

Now, the question to finish with is this, "Is Christ my way today?" Oh, I know many of you could rise up and say, "Yes, He is, He is all my salvation and all my desire--

"Nothing in my hands I bring, Simply to the Cross I cling."

"My God, You know all things. You know my soul's only reliance is on Your dying, Your risen, Your ever-living Son, who is my hope, my All."

But, perhaps there are some here who are not in this way, because they do not even know it. I believe there is no doctrine so little known in England as the Gospel. While a great many doctrines are preached, and very properly so, and the precepts are preached, yet there are hearers who have heard for years, and yet do not know this fundamental, essential doctrine of the Gospel--that God laid sin on Christ that He

might take sin off from us, and punished Him that He might be Just and yet the justifier of the ungodly. If you have never heard it before you have heard it now. You will not perish, therefore, with that excuse. If you put aside that way of salvation, it will not be because you have never heard it. If you perish, there will be no excuse for you.

But there are some who do not believe this plan to be Divine. When they hear it and understand it, they scrap it. Some will say it is inconsistent with the pursuit of morality. Others will say it is fantastic or unjust. One will say this and another that. But though the Cross of Christ is to them that perish foolishness, to us who are saved it is the wisdom of God and the power of God--and God forbid we should preach any other Gospel to you. Some there are who even hate it. They will gnash their teeth at the idea of being pardoned through the merit of Another, their righteous self feels indignant at being insulted by being put right out of the market.

Ah, cast not your soul away out of mere hate to God, but kiss Him whom God has made King this day, and trust in Him who is Priest forever after the order of Melchisedek, to put away the sin of man by His own great sacrifice. Come now to Him and take the Atonement and the peace which He brings. Some are not saved because they are too fearful to come this way, but to such I would speak very gently. The bruised reed He will not break, the smoking flax He will not quench. Let not your sense of sin make you think little of my Master.

You are a great sinner, but He is a greater Savior. Do not say that you have matched Christ, or overmatched Him. Come, Goliath Sinner, the Son of David can conquer you or save you yet--"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Think of David, how foully he had transgressed, yet with all the lust stains, and the murder spots upon

him, he had faith enough to say, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

And so shall you be whiter than snow, when once the bloody sacrifice of Christ in all its merit has become yours, as it may this very morning if you simply trust in Him. May my God the Eternal Spirit, may my God the blessed Father, may my God, even Jesus the Son, draw many reluctant hearts now, and His shall be the praise. Amen.

Chapter 35

The Spur

(No. 943)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 31, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work." John 9:4.

IF this ninth chapter of John is intended to be a continuation of the history contained in the eighth, as we think it is, it brings before us a very extraordinary fact. You will observe in the eighth chapter that our Lord was about to be stoned by the Jews. He therefore withdrew Himself from the circle of His infuriated foes, and passed through the crowd, not, I think, in a hurried manner, but in a calm and dignified way--as one not at all disconcerted, but wholly self-possessed. His disciples, who had seen His danger, gathered round Him while He quietly retreated. The group wended their way with firm footsteps till they reached the outside of the Temple.

At the gate there sat a man well-known to have been blind from his birth. Our Savior was so little flurried by the danger which had threatened Him that He paused and fixed His eyes upon the poor beggar, attentively surveying him. He stayed His onward progress to work the miracle of this man's healing. If it is so that the two chapters make up but one narrative, and I think it is, though we are not absolutely sure, then we have before us a most memorable instance of the marvelous calmness of our Savior while under danger.

When the Jews took up stones to stone Him, He did not needlessly expose His life, but after He had withdrawn a very little space from the

immediate danger He was struck by the sight of human misery and stood still awhile in all calmness of heart to do a deed or mercy. Oh, the Divine majesty of benevolence! How brave it makes a man! How it leads him to forget himself and despise danger, and become so calm that He can coolly perform the work which is given him to do!

I think I see our Savior thus considerate for others, and unmindful of Himself. May I add that there is a lesson here to us not only for imitation but for consolation! If He, while flying from His enemies, still stops to bless the blind, how much more will He bless us who seek His face now that He is exalted on High? Now that He is clothed with Divine power and Glory at the right hand of the Father? There is nothing to hurry Him now, He is exposed to no danger now. Send up your prayers, breathe out your desires, and He will reply, "According to your faith, so be it unto you."

Reading this cure of the blind man, one is struck, again, with the difference between the disciples and the Master. The disciples looked at this man, blind from his birth, as a great enigma, a strange phenomenon. And they began, like philosophers, to suggest theories as to how it was consistent with Divine Justice that a man should be born blind. They saw that there must be a connection between sin and suffering--but they could not trace the connection here. So they were all speculating upon the wonderful problem before them, which they knew not how to solve.

This suggestively reminds us of theorists upon another difficulty which never has been explained yet, namely, the origin of evil. They wanted to sail upon the boundless deep, and were anxious that their Master should pilot them. He had other and better work to do. Our Lord gave them an answer, but it was a short and curt one. He Himself was not looking at the blind man from their point of view. He was not

considering how the man came to be blind, but how his eyes could be opened. He was not so much meditating upon the various metaphysical and moral difficulties which might arise out of the case, but upon what would be the best method to remove from the man his suffering, and deliver him from his piteous plight.

A lesson to us, that instead of enquiring how sin came into the world, we should ask how can we get it out of the world. And instead of worrying our minds about how this Providence is consistent with Justice, and how that event can tally with benevolence, we should see how both can be turned to practical account. The Judge of all the earth can take care of Himself. He is not in any such difficulties that He needs any advice of ours. Only presumptuous unbelief ever dares suppose the Lord to be perplexed. It will be much better for us to do the work of Him that sent us than to be judging Di-

vine Providence, or our fellow men. It is ours not to speculate but to perform acts of mercy and love according to the tenor of the Gospel. Let us, then, be less inquisitive and more practical--less for cracking doctrinal nuts--and more for bringing forth the Bread of Life to the starving multitudes.

Once again, as a prefatory remark, our Lord tells us the right way of looking at sorrow and at sin. It was a dreadful thing to see a man shut out from the light of the sun from his very birth. But our Savior took a very encouraging view of it--His view of it was nothing at all desponding, nothing that could suggest complaining. It was most encouraging and stimulating. He explained the man's blindness thus--"Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

The man's calamity was God's opportunity. His distress was an occasion for displaying Divine goodness, wisdom, and power. I see sin

everywhere--in myself, in others, in this great city, in the nations of the earth--and very conspicuously sin and suffering in this thrice accursed war. But what shall I say of it? Sit down and wring my hands in utter despair? If so, I shall be incapable of service. No, if I would do good, as Jesus did, I must take His bravely hopeful view of things, and so keep my heart whole, and my loins girt ready for work. The Master's view of it is that all this mischief furnishes, through the infinite benevolence of God, a platform for the display of Divine Love. I remember in the life of Dr. Lyman Beecher, he tells us of a young convert who, after finding peace with God, was heard by him to say, "I rejoice that I was a lost sinner." Strange matter to be glad about, you will say, for of all things it is most to be deplored. But here was her reason--"Because God's infinite Grace, and mercy, and wisdom, and all His attributes are glorified in me as they never could have been had I not been a sinner and had I not been lost."

Is not that the best light in which to see the saddest things? Sin, somehow or other, desperate evil as it is, will be overruled to display God's goodness. Just as the goldsmith sets a foil around a sparkling diamond, even so the Lord has allowed moral and physical evil to come into this world to cause His infinite wisdom, Grace, power, and all His other attributes to be the better seen by the whole intelligent universe. Let us look at it in this light, and the next time we see suffering we shall say, "Here is our opportunity of showing what the love of God can do for these sufferers."

The next time we witness abounding sin let us say, "Here is an opportunity for a great achievement of mercy." I suppose great engineers have been very glad of Niagara, that they might span it. Very glad of the Mont Cenis that they might bore it. Very glad of the Suez

Isthmus that they might cut a canal through it--glad that there were difficulties that there might be room for engineering skill.

Were there no sin there had been no Savior. If no death, no Resurrection. If no Fall, no new Covenant. If no rebellious race, no Incarnation, no Calvary, no Ascension, no second advent. That is a grand way of looking at evil, and mar-velously stimulating. Though we do not know, and perhaps shall never know the deepest reason why an infinitely gracious God permitted sin and suffering to enter the universe, yet we may at least encourage this practical thought--God will be glorified in the overcoming of evil and its consequences. Therefore let us gird up our loins in God's name for our part of the conflict.

Thus much by way of preface. Now I shall invite you, this morning, and may God assist you while I invite, to consider first of all, the Master Worker. And, secondly, ourselves as workers under Him.

I. The text is a portrait Of THE GREAT MASTER WORKER. We will read it again--"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work." And first observe, this Master Worker takes His own share in the work--"/ must work"--/, Jesus, the Son of Man, for two or three years working here on earth in public ministry, I, I must work.

There is a sense in which all Gospel work is Christ's. As the atoning Sacrifice, He treads the winepress alone. As the great Head of the Church, all that is done is to be ascribed to Him. But only in the sense in which He used these words-- speaking of His human nature, speaking of Himself as living among the sons of men--there was a portion of the work of relieving this world's woe, and scattering Gospel Truth among men that He must do, and nobody else could do. "I must work."

"I must preach, and pray, and heal, even I, the Christ of God." In salvation, Jesus stands alone. In life-giving He has no human co-worker. But in light-giving, which He refers to in the fifth verse--"As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world"--in light-giving He has many companions. Though anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows in this respect, yet is it true that all His saints are the light of the world, even as Jesus Christ, while in the world was the world's light.

There were some to be cured by Him who could not be cured by Peter, or James, or John. Some to have the Good News brought to them who must not receive it from any lips but His own. Our Lord, when He became the Servant of servants, took His share in the common labors of the elect brotherhood. How this ought to encourage us! It is enough for the general if he stands in the place of observation and directs the battle. We do not usually expect that the commander shall take a personal share in the work of the conflict.

But with Jesus it is not so! He fought in the ranks as a common soldier. While as God-Man, Mediator, He rules and governs all the economy of Grace, yet as partaker of our flesh and blood He once bore the burden and heat of the day. As the great Architect and Master Builder He supervises all. Yet there is a portion of His spiritual temple which He condescended to build with His own hands. Jesus Christ has seen actual service, and actually resisted unto blood, amid the dust and turmoil of the strife.

This made Alexander's soldiers valiant, it is said, because if they were wearied by long marches Alexander did not ride, but marched side by side with them. And if a river had to be crossed in the teeth of opposition, foremost amidst all the risk was Alexander himself. Let

this be our encouragement--Jesus Christ has taken a personal share in the evangelization of the world. He has taken not only His own part as Head, and Prophet, and High Priest, and Apostle, in which He stands alone, but He has taken His part among the common builders in the erection of the New Jerusalem. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me."

Note, next, that our Lord laid great stress upon the gracious work which was laid upon Him. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me" "Whatever else is not done I must do that. The work allotted me of God, I must, as His servant, faithfully do. The Jews may be close at My heels, their stones may be ready to fall upon Me, but I must fulfill My lifework. I must open blind eyes, and spread the light around me. I can forget to eat bread, I can forget to find for Myself a shelter from the dews that fall so heavily at night, but this work I must do."

Beyond all things the Redeemer felt a constraint upon Him to do His Father's will. "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." Everything in life yielded in the Savior's case to His master passion. There were some works our Savior would not do. When one asked Him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance, though that might have been a useful thing, yet Christ did not feel a call to it, and he said, "Who made Me a judge and a divider over you?"

But when it came to the work of giving light, that He must do. This was the specialty of His life. To this He bent all His strength. He was like an arrow shot from a bow, speeding not towards two targets, but with undivided force hurrying towards one single end. The unity of His purpose was never for a moment broken--no second object ever eclipsed the first. Certain works of Grace, works of benevolence, works of light-giving, works of healing, works of saving--these He must do. He

must do them, His own part of them He must perform.

He rightly describes this work as the "work of God." Note that. If ever there lived a man who as man might have taken a part of the honor of the work to himself, it was the Lord Jesus. And yet over and over again He says, "The Father that dwells in Me, He does the works." As Man He is particularly careful to set us the example of acknowledging constantly that if any work is done by us it is the work of God through us. And so, though He says, "I must work," notice the next words, "the works of Him that sent Me." They are still my Father's works when most they are mine. Though I must work them, yet shall they still be ascribed to Him, and He shall derive honor from them. My Brethren, if I do not say much about this in respect to Christ, it is because it seems so much more easy to apply this to us than to Him, and if so easily applied, let it be humbly and practically remembered by us today. My Brother, if you shall win a soul by your work, it is God's work. If you shall instruct the ignorant, you do it, but it is God that does it by you if it is rightly done.

Learn to acknowledge the hand of God, and yet do not draw back your own. Learn to put out your own hand, and yet to feel that it is powerless unless God makes bare His arm. Combine in your thoughts the need of the all-working God and the duty of your own exertion. Do not make the work of God an excuse for your idleness, neither let your earnest activity ever tempt you to forget that power belongs unto Him. The Savior is a model to us in putting this just in the right form. It is God's work to open the blind eye. If the eye has been sealed in darkness from birth no man can open it,

God must do it. But yet the clay and the spittle must be used, and Siloam's pool must be resorted to, or the light will never enter the sightless eyes.

So in Grace, it is God's to illuminate the understanding by His Spirit. It is His to move the affections, His to influence the will, His to convert the entire nature. It is His to sanctify, and His to save. Yet you, O Believer, are to work this miracle--the Truths of God you shall spread will illuminate the intellect. The arguments you shall use will influence the affections. The reasons you shall give will move the will, the precious Gospel you shall teach will purify the heart. But it is God who does it--God indwelling in the Gospel.

See you to this, for only as you see these two Truths of God will you go to your work aright. I must work personally, and this holy work must be my special business, but I must do it in a right spirit, humbly feeling all the while that it is God's work in and through me. Our Lord, in this portrait of Himself, as the Master Worker, is clearly seen as owning His true position. He says, "I must work the work of Him that sent Me." He had not come forth from the Father on His own account. He was not here as a principal, but as a subordinate, as an ambassador sent by His King. His own witness was, "I can of My own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and My judgment is just because I seek not My own will, but the will of the Father which has sent Me."

He often reminded His hearers in His preaching that He was speaking in His Father's name, and not in His own name. As, for instance, when He said, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself." He took upon Himself the form of a servant. "The Spirit of the Lord," says He, "is upon Me. For He has anointed Me." God gave Him a commission and gave Him the Grace to carry out that commission--and He was not ashamed to confess His condition of service to the Father.

Though in His Divine Nature, God over all, blessed forever, whose praises ten thousand times ten thousand harpers are rejoiced to sound upon that glassy sea, yet as the Mediator He stooped to be sent--sent a

commissioned Agent from God, a Servant to do Jehovah's bidding. Because He was such, it behooved Him, as a Servant, to be faithful to Him that sent Him. And Jesus felt this as a part of the Divine constraint, which impelled Him to say, "I must work." "I am a sent Man. I have to give an account to Him that sent Me."

O Brothers and Sisters, I wish we all felt this! For as the Father sent Christ, even so has Christ sent us--and we are acting under Divine authority as Divine representatives, and must, if we would give our account with joy, be faithful to the communion with which God has honored us by putting us in trust with the Gospel of Christ. No man shall serve God aright if he thinks he stands upon an independent footing. It is recognizing your true position that will help to drive you onward in incessant diligence in the cause of your God.

But, dwelling very briefly on each of these points, I must remind you that our Lord did not regard Himself merely as an official, but He threw a hearty earnestness into the work He undertook. I see indomitable zeal glowing like a subdued flame in the very center of the live coal of the text. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me." Not, "I will," "I intend," "I ought," but "I must." Though sent, yet the commission was so congenial to His Nature that He worked with all the alacrity of a volunteer.

He was commissioned, but His own will was His main compulsion. Not of constraint, but willingly the Lord Jesus became a Savior. He could not help it. It was within His very Nature a sacred necessity that He must be doing good. Was He not God, and is not God the fountain of benevolence? Does not Deity, perpetually like the sun, send forth beams to gladden His creatures? Jesus Christ, the God Incarnate, by irresistible instinct must be found bestowing good. Besides, He was so tender, so compassionate, that He must be blessing those that sorrowed.

He felt for that blind man. If the blind man lamented his darkness, yet not more than the Savior lamented it for the poor sufferer's sake. The eyes which Christ fixed on that man were eyes brimming with tears of pity. He felt the miseries of humanity. He was not flinty-hearted, but tender, and full of compassion towards all suffering sons of men. Our Savior, therefore, was self-impelled to His gracious labors. His love propelled Him. He must do the work that He was sent to work.

It is a right thing when a man's business and inclinations run together. You put your son apprentice to a trade which is not congenial to his tastes and he will never make much of it. But when his duty and his own desires run in the same channel, then surely he is likely to prosper. So with Jesus--sent of God, but not an unwilling ambassador--coming as

cheerfully and joyously as if there had been no impetus but His own voluntary wish. He cries in gracious enthusiasm, "I must, I must."

No man does a really good and great work till he feels he must. No man preaches well but he who must preach. The man sent of God must come under irresistible pressure, even like the Apostle of old, who said, "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me, yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Or like the eloquent Eliphaz in the book of Job, who spoke last but best--and only spoke at all because he felt like a vessel wanting vent.

Our Savior became so grand a Worker because within His spirit desire kindled and burned and flamed till His Nature was all aglow. He was like a volcano in full action which must pour forth its fiery flood, though in His case the lava was not that which destroys, but that which blesses and makes rich!

Once again, another point in the Savior as a Worker--He clearly saw that there was a fitting time to work, and that this time would have

its end. In a certain sense Christ always works. For Zion's sake He does not rest, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not hold His peace in His intercessions before the Eternal Throne. But, my Brethren, as a Man, preaching, and healing, and relieving the sick on earth, Jesus had His day, as every other man, and that day ended at the set time. He used a common Eastern Proverb which says that men can only work by day, and when the day is over it is too late to work.

And He meant that. He Himself had an earthly lifetime in which to labor, and when that was over He would no more perform the kind of labor He was then doing. He called His lifetime a day. To show us that He was impressed with the shortness of it. We, too, often reckon life as a matter of years, and we even think of the years as though they were of extreme length, though every year seems to spin round more swiftly than before. And men who are growing gray will tell you that life seems to them to travel at a much faster rate than in their younger days.

To a child a year appears a lengthened period. To a man even ten years is but a short space of time. To God the Eternal a thousand years are but as one day. Our Lord here sets us an example of estimating our time at a high rate on account of its brevity. It is but a day you have at the longest. That day, how short! Young man, is it your morning? Are you just converted? Is the dew of penitence still trembling upon the green blade? Have you just seen the first radiance which streams from the eyelids of the morning? Have you heard the joyous singing of birds? Up with you, Man! And serve your God with the love of your espousals! Serve Him with all your heart! Or have you known your Lord now so long that it is noon with you, and the burden and heat of the day are on you? Use all diligence, make good speed, for your sun will soon decline. And have you long been a Christian? Then the shadows lengthen,

and your sun is almost down. Quick with you, Man, let both your hands be used! Strain every nerve, put every sinew to the stretch. Do all at all times, and in all places, what your ingenuity can devise, or your zeal can suggest to you, for the night comes wherein no man can work. I love to think of the Master with these furious Jews behind Him, yet stopping because He must do the work of healing! Because His day was still not ended. He cannot die, He feels, till His day is over. His time is not yet come, and if it were, He would close His life by doing one more act of mercy. And so He stops to bless the wretched, and afterwards passes on His way. Be you swift to do good at all times. "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Knowing that the time is short, redeem the time, because the days are evil. Press much into little by continuous diligence. Glorify your God greatly while the short taper of your life burns on, and God accept you as He accepted His Son. Thus much upon Christ, the Master Worker.

II. Now I shall want your earnestness while I try to speak of OURSELVES AS WORKERS UNDER HIM. Here I must go over much the same ground, for first I must call to your remembrance that on us there rests personal obligation. Singular, distinct, personal obligation. "I must work." "I," "I must work the works of Him that sent me." We are in danger nowadays of losing ourselves in societies and associations. We had need labor to maintain the personality of our consecration to Christ Jesus. The old histories are very rich in records of deeds of personal daring. We cannot expect modern warfare to exhibit much of the same because the fighting is done so much by masses and so much by machinery. Even thus, nowadays, I am afraid our mode of doing Christian work is getting to be so mechanical, so much en masse, that there is barely room in ordinary cases for personal deeds of daring and singular acts of valor.

Yet, mark you, the success of the Church will lie in this last--it is in each man's feeling, "I have something to do for Christ which an angel could not do for me, that the strength of a Church must lie under God. God has committed to me a certain work which, if it is not done by me, will never be done. A certain number of souls will enter Heaven through my agency. They will never enter there in any other way. God has given His Son power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as He has given Him, and Christ has given me power over some part of the flesh. By my instrumentality they will get eternal life, and by no other agency. I have a work to do, and I must do it."

Dear Brothers and Sisters, our Church will be grandly equipped for service when you all have this impression, when there is no casting the work on the minister, nor on the more gifted Brethren, nor leaving all to be done by distinguished sisters. But when each one feels, "I have my work, and to my work I will dedicate my whole strength to do it in my Master's name."

Now observe, secondly, the personal obligation in the text compels us to just such work as Christ did. I explained to you what it was. We are not called meritoriously to save souls, for alone He is the Savior, but we are called to enlighten the sons of men. That is to say, sin is not known to be sin by many. Our teaching and example must make sin to appear sin to them. The way of salvation by the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ is quite unknown to a large part of mankind. It is ours simply and incessantly to be telling out that soul-saving story. This work must be done whatever we leave undone.

Some men are spending their time in making money, that is the main object of their lives. They would be as usefully employed probably if they spent all their lives in collecting pins or cherrystones. Whether a man lives to accumulate gold coins or brass nails, his life will be

equally groveling and end in the same disappointment. Money-making, fame-making, and power-getting are mere pieces of play, mere sports and games for children.

The work of Him that sent us is a far nobler thing. It is permanent gain if I gain a soul. It is lasting treasure if I win the Lord's approval. I am forever richer if I give a man one better thought of God, if I bring to a darkened soul the light from Heaven, or lead one erring heart to peace. If one spirit hastening downward to Hell is by my means directed to a blissful Heaven, I have done some work worth doing.

And such work, Brethren, we must do, whatever else we leave undone. Let us make all else in this world subservient to this which is our life work. We have our callings, we ought to have them--the man who will not work, neither let him eat. But our earthly calling is not our lifework.

We have a high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and this must have the preeminence. Poor or rich, healthy or sick, honored or disgraced, we must glorify God. This is a necessity. All else may be, this must be.

We resolve, sternly resolve, and desperately determine that we will not throw away our lives on trifling objects, but by us God's work must and shall be done. Each man will do his own share, God helping him. May the ever blessed Holy Spirit give us power and Grace to turn our resolves into acts. Let us not forget the Truth which I declared to you before, namely, that it is God's work which we are called upon to do. Let us look to the text again. "I must work the work of Him that sent Me."

I can discover no greater motive for earnestness in all the world than this--that the work I have to do is God's work. There is Samson--the strength which lies in Samson is not his own--it is God's strength. Is that, therefore, a cause why Samson should lie still and be idle? No, but it is a mighty sound of a trumpet to stir the blood of the hero to

fight for the people of God. If the strength of Samson is not the mere force of sinew and muscle, but force given him of the Almighty One, then up with you, Samson, and smite the Philistines! Slay again your thousands!

What? Dare you sleep with God's Spirit upon you? Up, man! To sleep if you were but a common Israelite were treason to your country, but when God is in you and with you, how can you be idle? No, put forth your strength and rout your foes! When Paul was in Corinth, and God worked special miracles by his hands, so that handkerchiefs which were taken from his body healed the sick, was that a reason why Paul should withdraw himself to some quiet retreat and do nothing?

To my mind there appears to be no more potent argument why Paul should go from house to house and lay his hands on all around, and heal the sick. So with you--you have the power to work miracles, my Brother. The telling out of the Gospel, accompanied by the spirit of God, works moral and spiritual miracles. Because you can work these miracles, should you say, "God will do His own work"? No, Man, but right and left, at all times and in all places, go and tell out the soul-saving story, and God speed you! Because God works by you, therefore work!

A small vessel, lying idle in dock, without a freight, is a loss to its owner. But a great steamship, of many hundred horsepower, cannot be suffered to remain unemployed. The greater the power at command, the more urgently are we bound to use it. The indwelling power of God is put forth in reply to faith and prayer--shall we not labor to obtain it? The fact that the Church's work is God's work rather than hers is no cause why she should indulge in sloth. If she had only her own strength, she might waste it with less of crime. But having God's strength about her, she dares not loiter.

God's message to her this morning is, "Awake, awake! Put on your

strength, O Zion. Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." Would God that this message might come to every heart so that all of us would arise, because God is in our midst.

Brethren, notice in the text our obligation resulting from our position. We are all sent as Jesus was if we are Believers in Christ.

Let us feel our obligation pressing upon us. What would you think of an angel who was sent from the Throne of God to bear a message and who lingered on the way or refused to go? It was midnight, and the message came to Gabriel and his fellow songsters, "Go and sing over the plains of Bethlehem, where shepherds keep their flocks. Here is your sonnet, 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men.' " Could you conceive that they halted, that they wished to decline the task? Impossible with such music, and with such a commission given from such a Lord! They sped joyously on their way. Your mission is not less honorable than that of the angels. You are sent to speak of good things which bring peace and good will to men, and glory to God. Will you loiter? Can you any longer be dumb? No, as the Lord Jesus sends you, go forth, I pray you, go at once, and with joy tell out the story of His love.

I could conceive an angel being almost tempted to linger, if sent to execute vengeance, and to deluge fields with blood for the iniquity of nations. I dare not think that he would hesitate even then, for these holy spirits do the Lord's bidding most unquestioningly. But if the mission is of mercy, the loving spirit of an angel would leap for joy and be quickened by the sweetness of the errand as well as by the commission of his Lord. We, too, sent of God, if sent on hard service, are bound to go. But if sent on so sweet a service as the proclaiming of the Gospel, how can we tarry?

What? To tell the poor criminal shut up in the dungeon of despair that

there is liberty! To tell the condemned that there is pardon! To tell the dying that there is life in a look at the crucified One--do you find this hard? Do you call this toil? Should it not be the sweetest feature of your life that you have such blessed work as this to do? If tonight, when the day is over, when you are in your chamber alone, you should suddenly behold a vision of angels who should speak to you in celestial accents and nominate you to holy service in the Church, you would surely feel impressed by such a visit. But Jesus Christ Himself has come to you, has bought you with His blood, and has set you apart by His redemption. You have confessed His coming to you, for you have been baptized into His death, and declared yourself to be His. And are you less impressed by Christ's coming than you would have been by an angel's visit?

Stir yourself up, my Brother! The hand of the Crucified has touched you, and He has said, "Go in this your might." The eyes that wept over Jerusalem have looked into your eyes and they have said with all their ancient tenderness, "My servant, go and snatch dying sinners like brands from the burning by publishing My Gospel." Will you be disobedient to the heavenly vision, and despise Him that speaks to you from His Cross on earth and from His Throne in Heaven? Blood-washed as you are, blood-bought as you are, give yourself up more fully than ever you have done to the delightful service which your Redeemer allots you. Bestir yourself and say, "I, even I, must work the work of Him that sent me while it is

day."

You little know what good you may do, my Brethren, if you always feel the burden of the Lord as you ought to do. I was led to think of that fact from a letter which I have here, which did my heart good as I read it. I daresay the dear friend who wrote it is present--he will not mind

my reading an extract. He had fallen into very great sin, and though often attending at this Tabernacle, and being frequently stirred in heart, his conversion was not brought about till one day riding by railway to a certain town.

He says, "I entered into a compartment in which were three of the students of the Tabernacle College. Although I did not know them at first, the subject of temperance was introduced by myself. I found two of them were total abstainers, and one was not. We had a nice friendly chat and one of the abstainers asked me if I enjoyed the pardon of my sins and

peace with God. I told him I regularly attended the Tabernacle, but I could not give up all my sins. He then told me how, in his own case, he had found it very desirable to be much in prayer and communion with God, and how he was thus kept from many besetting sins.

"I concluded my business in the town, and was returning homeward. I was rather dull, as I had no money with me to pay for my ride home, and consequently had to walk all the way. I heard song-singing at a little Chapel. I entered, and

was invited to a seat. It was H_Baptist Chapel. It turned out that these three students with whom I had come in the

train some few hours before were there, and it was an occasion of deep concern to many, as one of the students, who was their pastor, was taking his farewell of his flock that evening, and many were in tears, himself also.

"I asked one of the students to pray for me. He did so, and I tried to lift up my whole heart to God, and, as it were, leave all my sins outside. But I found them a ponderous weight. At last I believed in Jesus and exercised a simple faith such as I never knew before. I became quite contrite and humiliated. I found the Lord there. He is

sweet to my soul. God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven me all my sins. I am happy now. I shall ever pray for the students at the Pastors' College, and never, I hope, begrudge my mite for the support of the same. God be praised for the students!"

See you thus that a casual word about Christ and the soul will have its reward. I heard once of a clergyman who used to go hunting and when he was reproved by his bishop, he replied that he never went hunting when he was on duty. But he was asked, "When is a clergyman off-duty?" And so with the Christian, when is he off duty? He ought to be always about his Father's business, ready for anything and everything that may glorify God. He feels that he is not sent on Sunday only, but sent always, not called now and then to do good, but sent throughout his whole life to work for Christ.

But I must finish. The greatest obligations seem to me, to lie upon each one of us to be serving Christ, because of the desperate case of our ungodly neighbors. Many of them are dying without Christ, and we know what their end must be--an end that has no end--a misery that has no bounds. Oh, the woe which sin causes on earth! But what is that to the never-ending misery of the world to come!

Our time in which to serve the Lord on earth is very short. If we would glorify God as dwellers on earth, we must do it now. We shall soon, ourselves, be committed to the grave, or they whom we would gladly bless may go there before us. Let us, then, bestir ourselves! I felt much weight on my mind yesterday, from the consideration that we, as a nation, are enjoying peace, an unspeakable blessing--the value of which none of us can rightly estimate. Now, if we do not make, as a Christian Church, the most earnest endeavors to spread abroad the Gospel in these times of peace, before long this nation may also be plunged in war. War is the most unmitigated of curses, and among its other mischiefs, it

turns the mind of the people away from all religious thoughts.

Now while we have peace, and God spares this land the horrors of war, ought not the Church of God to be intensely eager to use her opportunities? The night comes. I know not how dark that night may be. The political atmosphere seems heavily charged with evil elements. The result of the present conflict between France and Prussia may not be what some would hope, for it may again crush Europe beneath a despot's heel. Now, while we have liberty--a liberty which our sires bought at the stake, and sealed with their blood, let us use it. While it is day let us work the works of Him that sent us. And let each man take for his motto the succeeding verse to my text, "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world."

Take heed that your light be not darkness. Take heed you conceal it not. If it is light, take heed that you despise it not, for if it is ever so little a light, it is what God has given you, and as much as you will be able to give God a joyful account of. If you have any light, though it is but a spark, it is for the world you have it. For the sons of men it is lent you. Use it, use it now, and God help you.

O that our light as a Church would shine upon this congregation! How I desire to see all my congregation saved! Let Believers be more in prayer, more in service, more in holiness, and God will send us His abundant blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 36

An Encouraging Lesson From Paul's Conversion

(No. 944)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 7, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he has done to Your saints at Jerusalem: and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Your name.

But the Lord said unto him, Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:13-16.

THE conversion of Saul of Tarsus was one of the most remarkable facts in Christian history. Perhaps there has never happened an event of equal importance since the days of Pentecost. It was important as a testimony to the power and Truth of the Gospel. When such a man, so violently opposed, so intelligent and well-instructed, could be converted to the faith of the Nazarene by the appearance of the Lord from Heaven, it was a testimony alike to the fact of our Lord's Resurrection, and to the power of His Word.

Paul also occupied a high place among the defenders of the faith when the Gospel had to struggle for a footing against Judaism and philosophy. Being well-versed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and in the traditions of the Jews, and possessing great argumentative powers, he became a leading apologist for the faith. In the synagogues and the schools he overthrew those who opposed the doctrines of Jesus.

In addition to this, the conversion of the Apostle Paul gave a great

impetus to the missionary spirit of the Christian Church. Here he shone preeminently.

Into what lands did he not carry the Gospel? Ordained to be the Apostle of the uncircumcision, he proclaimed in the utmost ends of the earth the name of Jesus Christ. The Apostle, moreover, as a writer takes the highest place in the Christian canon. It pleased God to select this most remarkable man to be the medium of Inspiration by whose writings we should receive the most thorough and complete exhibition of the Gospel of the Grace of God. Turn to the New Testament and see with astonishment how large a space is occupied by the letters of one first called Saul of Tarsus, but afterwards Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ.

It is a matter of fact that Paul not only directed the energy of the Christian Church of his own day, but he shaped its mode of action. In addition he so toned the thought of the Christian world that to this moment I suppose he exercises, under God, a greater influence over the theology of Christendom than any other man. We claim him as the great Apostle of the Doctrines of Grace. Heading a line of teachers, among whom Augustine and Calvin stand conspicuous, he remains unrivalled as "a wise master-builder." Even the things hard to be understood which he was not afraid to grapple with have continued to have their effect upon Christian theology.

The Pauline mark will never be erased from the page of Church history. That, however, is not my business this morning. I would rather remind you that the conversion of the Apostle Paul was, in itself, instructive. It was not only operative upon the Church, but as a narrative it is instructive to us. We are not to look upon it as a strange phenomenon to be only gazed upon, and wondered at--it is a lesson book for all time. It contains a world of teaching within it,

and principally teaching upon this point--the fact of the Divine interposition in the Church of God.

God has been pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. This is the era of instrumentality-- Christ bids His disciples go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And it is by the communication of one earnest heart to another that men are usually converted. Such, however, was not the way by which Paul was converted. He was called into the Church by an interposition of the living Christ out of Heaven, speaking directly to his soul. And we doubt not that the same Jesus has still His own ways of reaching human hearts when human instrumentality is not available.

Paul's conversion is a type, or as our version reads it, a pattern, and it is natural to believe that the pattern has been copied. I shall look upon his conversion as being typical of some others that have occurred, and that will occur till the last hour of the Christian dispensation.

Certain men will be brought to God not by manifest instrumentality, but more secret means. The Church has reason to believe that while she industriously uses all the power committed to her, there will be interpositions of a power far higher than her own which will work for her great successes and bring to her great additions of strength.

While Barak fights below, the stars in Heaven shall also fight against Sisera. That is the point I want to speak upon, this morning, for the glory of God, and the encouragement of any desponding spirits among us.

I. Our first thought shall be, this morning, THERE ARE OTHER PRODUCTIVE FORCES AT WORK FOR THE CHURCH BESIDES HER TEACHING. Her teaching is her main source of growth. She is to look to the instruction that she can give through her members, and her ministers, for the birth of most of her sons and daughters. But she is also to remember that there are other forces at work over and above these appointed agencies. The

mountain is full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the Gospel.

And, first, let me remind you of what may be expected from the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ. All the success of the Church comes through Him. That blessed Person of the Divine Trinity in Unity is pleased to give power to the Truth of God whereby it operates upon the hearts and consciences of men. It is not to that point, however, that I draw your attention. I would ask you a question: Have we not reason to expect that the Holy Spirit will occasionally display His power, by working apart from the ordinary agencies of the Church?

It is certain that the Holy Spirit can act directly upon the minds of men apart from human agency, for He has often done so in past ages. He can, if it so pleases Him, melt the stubborn heart, subdue the obdurate will, and purify the depraved affections. And though I believe He never works apart from the Truth and the things of Christ, yet He can do all this while acting altogether apart from any human teaching. There have been many cases of the kind. We have heard of persons at their labor who have not been accustomed to attend the house of God, nor of reading religious books--and yet in the middle of their work they have been filled with penitent and devout thoughts--and have suddenly commenced an altogether new life.

We have known cases of persons not engaged in lawful pursuits, but intending to perpetrate vice, who have, nevertheless, found the power of God to be greater over them than the power of their corrupt affections. They have been struck with certain reflections which they had never recognized before, have paused, and have been led to turn altogether in another direction. They have, in fact, become believers in Christ and men of holy and ardent lives.

Why should not the Holy Spirit do so still? If He pleases to employ us,

it is to His honor to work by such poor instruments, but if He shall please occasionally to do without us, it is also to His honor, and I may add it is equally to our satisfaction. For we delight that He should display His power. We have reason to expect that He will so work sometimes, and this is one of the forces which may work apart from instrumentality.

Think again, my Brethren, of the intercession of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Most potent in Heaven is the plea of Him who here on earth offered Atonement for the sins of His people. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. Nor will He till His Glory shall fill all the earth, and His elect bride shall share there. Now our Lord Jesus Christ not only prays for those whom we pray for, but He prays for those we never thought of praying for.

There are some whom He mentions before the Eternal Throne whom we have never mentioned. They have never yet been observed by any interceding Christian, whose cases have never impressed a single godly heart. Yet Jesus knows them--and He does cry to God for them, and shall there not come to them Grace in due season? Yes, my Brethren, I rejoice in this, that where through ignorance or through the narrowness of my charity, my prayer has never stretched itself, the prayer of the great High Priest who wears the Urim and Thummim can yet reach, and the salvation of God shall come to such.

I doubt not Jesus might well have said to Paul, "I have prayed for you, and therefore you shall be Mine," and in many other cases the same is true. The intercession of our Lord is a mighty power, and as it wins gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious also, Apostles, and preachers, and teachers, are called forth by Divine Grace. Not our colleges, our coun-

cils, our societies, or our conferences, but the intercession of Jesus is the mainstay of our strength--the secret cause of the calling of men into the mystery of the Gospel.

Think, too, of another force, the result of which is not altogether expended in connection with manifest instrumentality. I mean the daily and incessant intercession of the faithful in all places. Of course, this intercession brings success to instrumentality, the work of the Church would be nothing without it--true prayer is true power. But there are prayers, I doubt not, which go up to Heaven but are not offered in connection with any particular agency, and are not answered through any manifest instrumentality.

There are groanings which cannot be uttered for the general cause, for the regeneration of the elect, for the Glory of the Redeemer in which we appeal directly to God, and look for Him to rend the heavens and arise in His might--such prayers most probably have a reply after their own likeness. The prayers of the Church come down in a great measure, as I have said, upon instrumentality, but they also drop, I doubt not, on solitary and uncultivated places. The prayers of God's Church are like the clouds which ascend from the sea, as the sun shines on the waves--they fall on the fields which have been sown by man, but they also drop upon the pastures of the wilderness--and the little hills rejoice on every side.

Who shall say that Saul's conversion was not traceable to the prayer of Stephen, when, as he expired, he said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"? Yet there was no distinct connection between the two such as could be defined and described. Who shall say that the gatherings in Jerusalem for earnest prayer may not have had about them power with God for the conversion of the persecutors, the dread of whom may have made them more earnest in supplication? Yet we do not see the same

connecting link as between the famous Prayer Meeting in the house of John Mark's mother, and the escape of Peter from prison.

Pray on, Beloved Brethren, for though there should seem to be no connection between your prayers and the salvation of the sons of men, yet this shall be one of the forces in operation which shall not spend itself in vain. God will be pleased, in answer to humble and unknown pleaders, to bring out His own hidden ones.

Then remember there is another impalpable, but very potent force--the aroma of the Truth of God in the world. The Truth is mainly spread by plain earnest statements of it, but there is also a savor in Truth, an inherent perfume, whereby even in our silence it spreads itself. Paul declared that where he had preached the Gospel he was a sweet savor of God, both in them that were saved and in them that perished. The Gospel is like myrrh, and cassia, and aloes. It will make itself felt even where it is not sought after. Place some Oriental perfume in a room and all the air will be loaded with its sweetness.

Where the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes, it impregnates the social atmosphere, it permeates society, it has an effect far beyond its local habitation. I do not doubt that many men who have not yet bowed before the Deity of Christ have unconsciously learned much from Him, and what they perhaps think to be their own is but a blessed plagiarism from the Jesus of Nazareth. Even the philosophies of men have been all the more sober, and the laws of men all the gentler, because of the existence of the Gospel.

Men cannot live in the midst of Christians, and yet altogether shut out the influence of Christianity. There is a lavender field over yonder, and though a man may hate the smell of it, and block up his windows and keep his doors closed, somehow or other, he may count on it, when the wind blows in the right direction, the perfume will reach him. And so

it is here--if a man will not listen to the preaching of the Gospel, if he constantly neglects attendance upon the means of Grace--yet for all that, the kingdom of Heaven has come near to him. And in some form or other the angel of mercy will frequently cross his path.

May we not hope for results from these influences? May not these things be the thin end of the wedge which shall be driven home by Divine force until the sinner is divided from his sins? I feel sure it is so in cases numberless. For we may say of the Gospel as David did of the sun, "His going forth is from the end of the Heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Further, remember there is at work in the world, wherever there are Believers, the influence of Christian life and of Christian death. Christian life wields a mighty power. Wherever the Christian acts up to his profession, and the Grace within him shines forth in holiness, those who observe him take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. And as example speaks more loudly than precept, we may look for very marked results. The eloquence of Christian holiness is more potent for conversion than all the speaking of Christian orators--may we not therefore hope for converts by it?

So, too, there are secret forces in every real Christian's death. When the ungodly man stands at the bedside and sees a Christian die singing in holy triumph, there may not be a word addressed to him--the dying Christian may be so absorbed in Heaven that he may scarcely have a thought of the sinner who is looking on--but that happy death will be a potent agency to arouse, to attract, to win the heart for Christ Jesus.

Besides that, my Brethren, we ought never to forget that all the work of God in Providence is on the side of those who fight for the Gospel of Jesus.

I might truly say of the Church that the stones of the field are in

league with her, and the beasts of the field are at peace with her, for all things work her good. Sickness, when it stalks through the land, is a powerful preacher to the unthinking masses. We have seen men impressed, in years of cholera, who despised religion before. We have marked them listening to us with attention when a disease has humbled them. When death has come into the house, and the dear babe has died, it has frequently happened that ears were opened which never heard the Gospel before. And hearts were impressed that were hard as iron until the fire of affliction melted them.

I believe Death himself to be an able ally of a faithful minister. The funerals which break men's hearts with natural sorrow are often overruled for the breaking of their hearts in a spiritual sense, also, so that oftentimes there are brought to Jesus, by the death of beloved ones, men who, to all human appearance, would otherwise have been lost. Have courage, you that fight for Christ--disease and death itself shall be overruled to help you. Physical calamities and catastrophes shall subdue the rebellious spirits of men, and you, then, stepping in with consolation, shall find a welcome for the Gospel.

As God sent the hornet before his conquering Israel to overthrow the Canaanites, so does He send Providences to work together, for our help, that the Truth may prevail. Providence, like the angel at the sepulcher, rolls away the stone for us. It makes straight in the desert a highway for God. It is the Elijah which clears the way for the coming Savior.

In addition to this, I must not fail to remind you that every man has a conscience. And though conscience is sadly impaired, it still leans to the right side. Conscience is not perfect, though some assert it to be so. In common with all the faculties of man it was disarranged by the Fall, and conscience is therefore no infallible judge of right and

wrong. Still, for all that, half-blinded as it is, it yet knows which is light and which is darkness. And though it puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, still in the violence which it puts upon itself, it reveals an inner sense as yet undestroyed.

Still is it a fact that even those who have not the Law, "are a Law unto themselves: which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." The right awakens still an echo in man's bosom. The pure, the good, the true still may count on recognition from the glimmering moral sense within. To the preacher this is a fact full of hope, and he ought not to forget it.

See then, that over and above our work which ought to be constant, incessant, intense, we have the Holy Spirit at work. We have Christ pleading. We have the whole company of the faithful sending up their perpetual intercessions. We have the blessed savor of the Truth of God spreading itself abroad. We have the evidence and power of holy living and triumphant dying. We have the wheels of Providence revolving, and the consciences of men made to yield an acquiescence to the Truth of God. I have thus very hurriedly run over a very extensive range of consideration.

II. Secondly, reflect, my Brethren, that FROM THESE SOURCES WE MAY EXPECT REMARKABLE CONVERSIONS. We expect to see the major part of conversion through the daily instruction given to the children of Christian people, through the constant preaching of the Gospel, the distribution of religious literature, and the direct efforts of the followers of Christ. But over and above all this, we have a right to expect remarkable conversions from the less manifest sources of which I have spoken.

As in the case of Saul, these conversions will bring to us persons

formerly violently opposed to the Truth through prejudice. In Paul we see a man opposed to Christ not because he was opposed to the Truth of God, but because he thought that Jesus was not the Messiah. He worshipped God, the God of his fathers, with a fervent heart--and because he conceived that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be what He was not--he hunted down His disciples to the death.

Once convinced that he was wrong, he followed the right at once. And we may hope that interpositions will occur in which the Holy Spirit will enlighten the darkness of men who are honest in their darkness, and that they, seeing the light, will embrace the Gospel and bow before our King. Be that a subject of your prayers. I doubt not there are to be found, this day, devoted to an evil cause, men who nevertheless would not willfully choose what they knew to be error. They are devoted to it because in their ignorance they sincerely believe it to be true.

Many a heretic has died for his heresy, believing it to be the very Truth of God. Our prayers should be that these men who would do right if they but knew it, may receive the blessed help of Him who is the light of the world, and may be brought to see in His light the true light. In such cases I should hope for their enlightenment. They are seeking goodly pearls, and I trust they will find the Pearl of Great Price. He who has made them honest and good ground will, we trust, sow them with good seed.

We may expect, too, from these sources, the conversion of persons who have been doing much mischief to the good cause, and who are resolved to do still more. Does not Ananias put it so? "He has done great evil to the Church at Jerusalem, and here he has authority to bind all who call on Your name." Yes, but do not despair of a man because he is industriously opposed. Do not despair of him even because he is furious. Anything is better than to slumber in indifference. Provoke a

man by the Gospel till he gnashes his teeth at you and he is none the less likely to be converted.

Preach to him till he says, "He plays well upon a goodly instrument, he makes sweet sounds to charm my ears," and you will probably lull him into everlasting destruction. I love to see men rather aroused to oppose, than made to acquiesce, because they care not whether the Gospel is true or false. We may expect the Lord to arrest the chief ones among His enemies, for it will glorify Him.

These sources will probably produce converts from among those who are beyond the reach of ordinary ministries. We sometimes regret that the voice of a thoroughly faithful ministry is seldom heard in the courts of kings, and that there is little hope of the Gospel's reaching the great ones of the earth. No, but for all that, the Lord can reach those whom we cannot reach. He can in life or in the dying hour come to the hearts of men whose ears were never reached by any testifier to the Truth, and He can bring them yet to His feet. He is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Paul would not have heard a preacher of Christ. He would have hurried him to prison, but never have listened to him. There was no likelihood of Saul's conversion by ordinary means. He would not stop to examine any documents had they been offered to him. Apologists for Christ he would have rejected with scorn--but the Lord has a way where we have none--and He calls whom He will by His own Sovereign power.

We may expect persons who shall be converted by these causes to become very earnest. A man who feels that God has had singular mercy upon him feels that being much loved, and having had much forgiven, he must render much service. If I have been brought to Christ in the Sunday school, or after habitual listening to the Truth, I am a great debtor to the mercy of God. But the probabilities are that I shall not be so

much impressed with my indebtedness as I ought to be. But if I have been quite out of the way, as it were, in the wilderness of sin, and yet the voice of the Lord that breaks the cedars of Lebanon has sounded in my ears--then I shall glorify that voice--and glorifying it consecrate myself to the God who uttered it.

Such men, too, become profoundly evangelical. I trace Paul's exceeding evangelism to the fact that he was so remarkably converted. He could not be content with the surface of Truth--he dived into the depths of Grace and Sovereignty. He saw in himself the boundless power, the infinite mercy, the absolute Sovereignty of God. And therefore he bare witness more clearly than any other to these Divine attributes. He spoke of election, and predestination, and the deep things of God. Who but he could have written the ninth of Romans, or the Epistle to the Galatians?

Courage, then, my Brothers and Sisters--the noble minds will yet be engaged in the service of our Master. They tell us that the power of Popery spreads in the land, that everywhere men are going back to the old falsehoods from which they once were delivered. We are told that we are to be ground down again beneath the iron wheels of superstition. And on the other hand, we hear that infidelity and skepticism spread themselves like a plague over the land. Be not afraid. God will convert the priests and convince the infidel demagogue. You need not fear. The leaders on the enemy's side shall yet be champions in our Master's army.

Reckon not your feeble bands. Count not the timid soldiers already enlisted. Say not, "How few we are and how weak!" You know not where the Lord's hidden warriors are, nor what chief among the mighties He has concealed. They are not merely hidden among the stuff of worldliness, but they are there, in open hostility to His Cross and

Crown--the mightiest warriors against Christ. Some of these shall, through conquering Grace, become the servants of God. Can you not believe it? Have you no faith in Jesus Christ? Believing it, will you not pray for it? Praying for it, will you not expect it? All things are possible to him that believes. Above all, everything is possible to the might of the eternal God and His ever-blessed Spirit. We must say no more on that, but pass on to a third reflection.

III. THIS OCCASIONAL SINKING OF INSTRUMENTALITY ANSWERS ADMIRABLE ENDS. It might be thought to be a dangerous thing that sometimes God should work in Grace apart from man. I mean dangerous to the industry of the Church, for some are always ready enough to clutch at excuses for leaving God's work alone. And there are always certain indolent spirits who would gladly say, "Let God do His own work, it can be accomplished without us, we therefore may be excused."

These men know better. They know the falsehood of their talk. It were not worth the Master's while to confute them, their own hearts condemn them. There are admirable reasons for the Lord's sole working--for, first, these interpositions disclose the Presence of the living Christ. We, too, often forget the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet the power of the Church lies in Christ. He is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. Some may remember Jesus, but not in His present Personal Character.

In the Roman Catholic Church its power over devout minds lies in no small degree in the fact that the Person of Christ is much spoken of, loved, and reverenced. But mark well that you seldom see the Christ of the Romish Church in any but two attitudes. As a rule, either He is a babe in His mother's arms, or else He is dead--scarcely ever is He set forth by them as the living King, Head, and Lord. In both of those

first aspects let Him be reverenced, let the incarnate God and the dying Savior have your hearts. But there is another fact to be borne in mind, and that is that He ever lives! That Church which, not forgetting His birth, nor His sacrifice, yet most clearly recognizes that He still lives, is the Church that shall win the day.

We must have a living Head to the Church, we cannot do without one. Men will assuredly invent a living head on their own account, if they overlook the living Christ. They will find some priest or other whom they would gladly gird with the attributes of Deity, and set up as the Vicar of Christ. But we have a living Christ, and when He is pleased to appear to any man by His Spirit--I speak not of miraculous appearances, but of other direct operations of His Spirit upon the spirits of men--when He reveals Himself apart from instrumentality to man, then the Church discovers yet, again, that He is in her midst fulfilling His promise--"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Still the Lord Jesus walks among the golden candlesticks and exerts a living force in the hearts and consciences of men--and He would have us remember this.

Further, dear Friends, these interpositions tend to remind the Church of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit. The tendency nowadays is to expunge the supernatural, to bring everything down to the rule of reason, and the denial of faith. But for all that, there is a Holy Spirit. Rest assured that that doctrine of the creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit," is a matter of reality. I am as certain that there is a Holy Spirit as that I live, for unto my spirit He has spoken, and I have come into contact with Him. I know that there are men's minds, for those minds have affected me. I know also that there is an Eternal Spirit, for He has affected my spirit, and I speak concerning Him what I know, and testify what I have seen. In proportion as that Truth is

made clear to the Church by her personal experience, by the Spirit's moving where He wishes, and working Divine wonders, the Church will be girt with power from on High.

This, too, tends to unveil many of the Divine attributes. Men so remarkably converted are sure to display the Sovereignty of God. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is an utterance which rolls like thunder over the head of Paul when he sinks amidst the blaze of the light from Heaven. God is saving whom He wills, for He stops the persecutor in the fury of his rage. There, too, was seen God's power. There might have been heard as a thunderclap from Heaven, "Power belongs unto God," when down fell Saul, wounded beneath the arrows of the Prince of Peace. There, too, was seen Divine Grace. Paul looked upon himself as the fairest pattern of God's longsuffering, obtaining mercy, though he had persecuted the Church of God. The very chief of sinners, and yet made not a whit behind the chief of the Apostles.

And so these remarkable conversions aid very much the faith of the Church. When she is beginning to droop and to sink, when holy men fancy that at least, for awhile, the cause must wither, and even the bravest spirits wait rather than press forward--then it is that these remarkable conversions come in and inspirit the whole band--and they take courage and march to the victory with willing footsteps!

And this also startles and impresses the world. What does the world know of the conversion of those who have sat in these pews ever since they were children? What does the world care about the faith of those who, happily for themselves, were led to Jesus from their youth? But let some gross blasphemer weep the tear of penitence. Let some bold persecutor preach the faith which once he sought to destroy, and the whole city hears of it! The land is astonished and in proportion God is

glorified, and the power of His Grace is manifested.

Thus, you see, there are good reasons for the Lord thus working. He may do as He wills. He will have us see that He does not need us. He may, if He pleases, use us. It is His rule to do so, and we are to work knowing that to be the rule. But we must adore, and admire, and bless Him that sometimes, putting us aside, He puts His own bare arm to the work. Thus His glorious right arm is exalted, for the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

IV. We shall now come to our fourth point, and draw towards a close.

ALL THIS BY NO MEANS LOWERS THE VALUE OF INSTRUMENTALITY. It is not so intended, and only stupidity would so interpret it. For, first, such cases are rare, very much rarer than conversions by the agency of the Church. One Saul is struck to the earth, only one. But Peter preaches at Pentecost, and three thousand are pricked in their hearts. See the difference in numbers!

The preaching of the Gospel is God's way of converting--His usual and general way. "Since all His paths drop fatness," it is especially so with this path of the ministration of the Truth by an earnest heart to other hearts. One Paul, I say, one Paul on the road to Damascus--but three thousand saved by the preaching of the word by Peter. I read of one Colonel Gardner who, on the very night he was about to commit a great sin saw, or fancied he saw, the appearance of our Lord, and heard the words, "I have done all this for you, what have you done for Me?" There is one such case--only one--I believe most certainly a true case. But there were fifty thousand, perhaps, in Scotland and in England at that time who were brought to a knowledge of the Truth by the ordinary methods of mercy. So the exhibition of special interposing Grace now and then does not interfere with the regular work of the Church, or lower our esteem of it. Riding along, I see in the hedgerow a tree with

rich fruit upon it. I am surprised, I do not know how it came there, it is a very unusual thing to see our garden fruit trees in public hedgerows. But when I have seen it I do not think any the less of my neighbor who over yonder is planting fruit trees in his orchard.

That is the ordinary way to get fruit. If now and then a fruit tree springs up upon the heath, if we are hungry we are glad to pluck the fruit--we do not know how it got there, and it is of no consequence that we should know--there is the fruit, and we are glad of it. But still we do not give up our orchard. Because sometimes a man finds a shilling, does he give up work? Extraordinary events in nature are always treated as such, and are not made the rule of everyday action. Even thus wise men treat unusual displays of Divine power. To forego regular agency that we may wait for wonders were as idle as to leave the regular pursuits of commerce to live upon the trash washed up by the sea.

Remember, next, that these very cases involve human agency somewhere. Saul is on his way to Damascus, and, lo, he is struck down by the light, and by a voice from Heaven is converted. But after the three days of blindness and fasting, how does he get comfort? Does that come by another voice from Heaven? It might have. But the Lord takes care that the very instrumentality which is put aside in one place shall be honored in another, and so Ananias must be sent forth to bless the penitent.

Ananias was a plain disciple. We do not know that he was either a preacher or an Evangelist, but a disciple of good repute, living at Damascus. And he must come and say, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto you in the way, has sent me." So you shall always find in conversion that there is instrumentality somewhere or other. My dear Brother, if God is pleased to convert a soul without using you, He

may honor you by employing you to comfort him after conversion. Conviction may be worked by the Holy Spirit without means, but in the full decision, in the laying hold on Christ, He may give you occupation. Somewhere or other God will use you--only be a vessel fit for the Master's use-- and you will not be long out of service.

Further, so far from dishonoring instrumentality, the conversion of Saul and others of the kind is a provision of a most remarkable instrumentality. "I have called him"--not to be a singular article for exhibition--but, "to be a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name among the Gentiles." Remarkable converts become themselves the most indefatigable servants of God. Paul put all the wheels of the Church in more rapid motion than they ever knew before, and became himself one of the greatest wheels.

He goes everywhere preaching the Gospel, so that instrumentality is not silenced, but God helps it to a higher position than before. Was it not through Paul that men were called into the fellowship and afterwards into the work of Jesus Christ? Should we ever have heard of such as Timothy and Titus and others if Paul had not been their spiritual parent? So that here we have not only a master worker begotten by this non-instrumental work, but he also begets other workers, and so the work of God to distant generations receives an impetus from the conversion of one single man. No, God does not dishonor instrumentality. If He puts it by for awhile to glorify Himself, He brings it forward again in due season and makes it brighter and more fit for His purpose.

Let us adore, dear Friends, in conclusion, the power of the All-Working God. Let us reverence and worship Him. In our gatherings as Christians, let us worship Him with whom power still dwells. Let us not look to the earnestness of that man, or to the wealth of this, to the judgment of a

third, to the eloquence of a fourth--but let us look to Him who has all power in Heaven and in earth. "Whom having not seen we love," "in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Let us believe that the Father works up to now and Christ works. Let us think of Him, who "works all things according to the counsel of His own will." Let us never be dispirited, but believe that the everlasting purpose of God will be accomplished--that the success of His Church will never be in jeopardy--that the onward march of the armies of God can be in no peril. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. All the earth shall worship Him, and Christ shall be acknowledged to be God to the glory of God the Father.

The power to accomplish this is not contained in these poor vessels of clay, nor limited by the capacities of manhood, nor bounded by the perceptions of mortals! The arm which is on the side of the Church is Omnipotent. The mind that works over all for the glorious cause is infinitely wise and prudent. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your hearts. Wait, I say, on the Lord." Keep His way, delight also yourselves in Him, and He shall bring it to pass, and you shall see that accomplished which you would not have believed though a man had spoken it unto you. Go on working, there is your sphere. Pray much that God would work also, for prayer is another part of your sphere.

Expect God to work, believe that He will surely conquer Satan. Be confident that evil will not win the day, that error cannot be permanent, that there will occur Divine surprises which will make the Church to wonder at what her Lord God can do! In one word, believe, and you shall be established. Wait upon God and you shall be strong. Never give way to unbelief. Believe in the unseen. Rest in the invisible.

Have confidence in the Infinite. And the Lord send to us and to all Christendom a band of men whom He has chosen whom He shall call out as He did His Apostle--and who shall become the leaders of His Church, and the conquerors of the world. The Lord grant that some who are here this morning may be among that elect company. Amen.

Ripe Fruit

(No. 945)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My soul desired the first ripe fruit." Micah 7:1.

THE nation of Israel had fallen into so sad and backsliding a condition--it was not like a vine covered with fruit, but like a vineyard after the whole vintage has been gathered--there was not to be found a single cluster. Not one righteous man could be found, not one to be trusted or found faithful to God. The whole state had become like a field that has been closely reaped, in which nothing remains but the stubble--like a vineyard that has been completely stripped, in which there remains no vestige of fruit.

The Prophet, speaking in the name of Israel, desired the first ripe fruits, but there were none to be had. The lesson of the text, as it stands, would be that good men are the best fruit of a nation--they make it worth while that the nation should exist. They are the salt which preserves it, they are the fruit which adorns it and blesses it. Pray we then for our country, that God will continually raise up a righteous seed, a faithful band, who, for His name's sake, shall be a sweet savor unto God, for whose sake He may bless the whole land.

But I mean to take our text out of its connection and use it as the heading of a discourse upon ripeness in Divine Grace. I think we can all use the words of Micah in another sense, when he said, "My soul desired the first ripe fruit." We would desire not to be merely the green blade, we desire to be the full corn in the ear. We would not

merely show forth the blossoms of repentance and the young buds of struggling faith, but we would go on to maturity and bring forth fruit unto perfection, to the honor and praise of Jesus Christ.

This morning, then, I speak about ripeness in Grace, maturity in the Divine life, fruit ready to be gathered--and our first point shall be the marks of this ripeness. The second, the causes that work together to create this ripeness. The third, the desirability of the ripeness. The fourth, the solemnity of the whole subject.

I. First, then, let us speak upon THE MARKS OF RIPENESS IN GRACE. Let us begin with the mark of beauty. There is a great beauty in a fruit tree when it is in bloom. Perhaps there is no more lovely object in all nature than the apple blossom. But this beauty soon fades--one shower of rain, one descent of hail, one puff of the north wind--and very soon the blossoms fall like snow. And if they remain their full time, speedily, indeed, in any case, they must withdraw from view.

Much loveliness adorns youthful piety. The love of his espousals, his first love, his first zeal, all make the newborn Believer comely. Can anything be more delightful than our first graces? Even God Himself delights in the beauty of the blossoming Believer. "I remember you," says He, "the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." Autumn has a more sober aspect, but still it rivals the glory of spring. Ripe fruit has its own peculiar beauty. As the fruit ripens, the sun tints it with surpassing loveliness and the colors deepen till the beauty of the fruit is equal to the beauty of the blossom, and in some respects is superior.

What a delicacy of bloom there is upon the grape, the peach, the plum, when they have attained perfection! Nature far excels art, and all the attempts of the modeler in wax cannot reach the marvelous blends of color, the matchless tints of the ripe fruit, worthy of Eden before the

Fall. It is another sort of beauty altogether from that of the blossom, yielding to the eye of the farmer, who has the care of the garden, a fairer sight by far. The perfumed bloom yields in value to the golden apple, even as promise is surpassed by fulfillment. The blossom is painted by the pencil of hope, but the fruit is dyed in the hue of enjoyment.

There is in ripe Christians the beauty of realized sanctification which the Word of God knows by the name of "the beauty of holiness." This consecration to God, this setting apart for His service, this watchful avoidance of evil, this care-

ful walking in integrity, this dwelling near to God, this being made like unto Christ--in a word, this beauty of holiness is one of the surest emblems of maturity in Grace. You have no ripe fruit if you are not holy.

If your passions are still not subdued, if still you are carried about by every wind of temptation--if still, "Lo here, and lo there," will attract you to the right hand and to the left, you have not reached to anything like maturity-- perhaps you are not even fruit unto God at all. But where holiness is perfected in the fear of God, and the Christian is at least striving after perfect holiness--and aiming to be conformed to the image of Christ--one of the marks of the ripe fruit is plainly present.

Another mark is never absent in a mature Believer--namely, the weight which is evidenced in humility. Look at the corn in the field, it holds its head erect while it is green, but when the ear is filled and matured, it hangs its head in graceful humbleness. Look at your fruit trees, how their blossoming branches shoot up towards the sky, but when they begin to be loaded with fruit, since the riper the fruit the greater its weight, the branch begins to bow, until it needs oftentimes

to be propped up and to be supported, lest it break away from the stem. Weight comes with maturity, lowliness of mind is the inevitable consequence.

Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Full-grown Christians know that they are less than nothing. The nearer we are to Heaven in point of sanctification, the more we mourn our infirmities, and the humbler is our estimate of ourselves. Lightly laden vessels float high in the water, heavy cargo sinks the boat to the water's edge. The more Grace, the more the need of Grace is felt. He may boast of his Grace who has none. He may talk much of his Grace who has little, but he who is rich in Grace cries out for more, and forgets that which is behind.

When a man's inward life flows like a river, he thinks only of the Source, and cries before his God, "All my fresh springs are in You." He who abounds in holiness feels more than ever that in him, that is in his flesh, there dwells no good thing. You are not ripened, my Brothers and Sisters, while you have a high esteem of yourself. He who glories in himself is but a babe in Christ, if indeed he is in Christ at all.

When you shall see death written on the creature, and see all your life in Christ. When you shall perceive even your holy things to have iniquity in them, and see all your perfectness in Him who is altogether lovely. When you shall lie prostrate at the foot of the Throne, and only rise to sit and reign in Him who is your All, then are you ripening, but not till then.

Another mark of ripeness which everyone perceives in fruit, and by which, indeed, the maturity of many fruits is tested, is tenderness. The young green fruit is hard and stone-like. But the ripe fruit is soft, yields to pressure, can almost be molded, retains the mark of the finger. So is it with the mature Christian--he is noted for tenderness of spirit. Beloved, I think if I must miss any good thing, I would give

up many of the Graces if I might possess very much tenderness of spirit. I am persuaded that many Christians violate the delicacy of their consciences, and there lose much of true excellence.

Do you not remember, my Brothers and Sisters, when you used to be afraid to put one foot before another for fear you should tread in the wrong place? I wish we always felt in that same manner. You remember when you were afraid to open your mouth lest, perhaps, you should say something that would grieve the Spirit? I would we were always so self-diffident. "Open You my lips"--I am afraid to open them myself. "Open You my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise."

An extreme delicacy concerning sin should be cultivated by us all. When the Believer can listen to a song with a las-civiousness tone and does not feel himself indignant, let him be indignant with himself. When he can come across sin and feel that it does not shock him as once it did, let him be shocked to think that his conscience is being so seared. I would give you for a prayer--that verse from Wesley's hymn--

"Quid as the twinkle of an eye,
O God, my conscience make,
Awake my heart, when sin is near.
And keep it still awake."

The sensitive plant, as soon as it is touched, begins to fold up its leaves. Touch it again and the little branches droop, until at last it stands like the bare poles of a vessel--all its sail of leaf is furled, and it seems as if it would, if it could-- shrink into nothing to avoid your hand. So should you be, so should I be, tender to the touch of sin, so as to say with the Psalmist, "Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law." Such tenderness is a prominent mark of ripeness, and it should be exhibited, not only in relation to sin, but in other ways.

We should manifest tenderness towards the Gospel--glad to hear it, thankful even for a little of it. Glad to eat the crumbs from the Master's table. Tenderness towards Christ so that the heart does leap at the sound of His name. Tenderness towards the motions of the Spirit so as to be guided by His eye. The Spirit often, I doubt not, comes to us and we do not perceive Him because we are heavy of hearing, we are dull of understanding. The photographer may place his plate in the camera, and the object to be taken may be long before it, and well focused, too--and yet no impression may be produced. But when the plate is made sensitive, thoroughly sensitive--then it receives the image at once.

that your heart and mine might be sensitive to receive the impression of the Holy Spirit so that on us there shall be printed at once the mind and will of God! Dear Friend, bear this in your memory, and forget not that it shall be a token of your ripeness when the hardness is departing, when the heart of stone is being supplanted by the heart of flesh, and when the soul yields promptly to the Presence of Christ, and the touch of His Spirit.

Another mark of ripeness is sweetness, as well as tenderness. The unripe fruit is sour, and perhaps it ought to be, or else we should eat all the fruits while they were yet green. If pears and apples had the same flavor when they are but small, as afterwards, I am sure where there are children, very few of them would come to their full development. It may, therefore, be in the order of Grace a fit thing that in the youthful Christian some sharpness should be found which will ultimately be removed.

There are certain Graces which are more martial and warlike than others, and have their necessary uses--these we may expect to see more in the young men than in the fathers. And they will be toned down by

experience. As we grow in Grace, we are sure to grow in charity, sympathy, and love. We shall have greater and more intense affection for the Person of "Him whom having not seen we love." We shall have greater delight in the precious things of His Gospel. The doctrine which perhaps we did not understand at first, will become marrow and fatness to us as we advance in Grace. We shall feel that there is honey dropping from the honeycomb in the deeper truths of our religion.

We shall, as we ripen in Grace, have greater sweetness towards our fellow Christians. Bitter-spirited Christians may know a great deal, but they are immature. Those who are quick to censure may be very acute in judgment, but they are as yet very immature in heart. He who grows in Grace remembers that he is but dust, and he therefore does not expect his fellow Christians to be anything more. He overlooks ten thousand of their faults, because he knows his God overlooks twenty thousand in his own case. He does not expect perfection in the creature, and, therefore, he is not disappointed when he does not find it.

As he has sometimes to say of himself, "This is my infirmity," so he often says of his Brethren, "This is their infirmity." And he does not judge them as he once did. I know we who are young beginners in Grace think ourselves qualified to reform the whole Christian Church. We drag her before us and condemn her straightway. But when our virtues become more mature, I trust we shall not be more tolerant of evil, but we shall be more tolerant of infirmity, more hopeful for the people of God, and certainly less arrogant in our criticisms. Sweetness towards sinners is another sign of ripeness.

When the Christian loves the souls of men. When he feels that there is nothing in the world which he cares for so much as endeavoring to bring others to a knowledge of the saving Truth of God. When he can lay

himself out for sinners, bear with their ill manners, bear with anything, so that he might but lead them to the Savior--then is the man mature in Grace. God grant this sweetness to us all. A holy calm, cheerfulness, patience, a walk with God, fellowship with Jesus, an anointing from the Holy One--I put all these together--and I call them sweetness, heavenly lusciousness, full-flavored of Christ. May this be in you and abound.

1 hope I shall not weary you with these marks and signs. I shall not if you can find them in yourselves. Fullness, again, is the mark of ripeness, seen when the fruit is plumped out and arrived at its fair and full proportions. The man in Christ Jesus has a fullness of Grace. As he advances in the Divine life, all the Graces which were in him at his new birth are strengthened and revealed. I suppose that in the newly formed ear of wheat all the kernels are present, but they are not yet manifested. As the ear advances to maturity these grains begin to solidify and become more full.

So with the Believer. There is repentance in him, but not such repentance as he will have as he sees more the love of Christ in pardoning his sin. There is faith in him, certainly, but not such faith as he shall have when afterwards he shall boldly declare, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." There is joy in him at the very first, but not the joy which he will possess when he will rejoice in the Lord always, and yet again rejoice. Experience deepens that which was there before. Young Christians have the first draughts, the outline of the image of Christ, but as they grow in Grace there comes the filling up, the coloring, the laying on of the deeper tints, the bringing out of the whole picture. This it is to grow mature when we know whom we have believed by acquaintance with Him, when we know sin by having struggled

with it, when we know the faithfulness of God by having proved it, when we know the preciousness of the promise by having received it, and having it fulfilled in our own souls--this it is to be a ripe Christian, to be full of Grace and Truth like our Master.

Only one other mark of ripeness, and a very sure one, is a loose hold of earth. Ripe fruit soon parts from the bough. You shake the tree and the ripest apples fall. If you wish to eat fresh fruit you put out your hand to pluck it, and if it comes off with great difficulty you feel you had better leave it alone a little longer. But when it drops into your hand, quite ready to be withdrawn from the branch, you know it to be in good condition.

When, like Paul, we can say, "I am ready to depart," when we set loose all earthly things, oh, then it is that we are ripe for Heaven! You should measure your state of heart by your adhesiveness, or your resignation in reference to the things of this world. You have some comforts here, some of you have money, and you look upon it, and you feel, "it were hard to part with this"--this is green fruit. When your Grace is mature, you will feel that though God should give you even greater abundance of this world, you are still an exile longing for the better land.

"Whom have I in Heaven but You? There is none upon earth that I desire beside You." This is the mature Believer's question. His song often is --

"My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice,
'Rise up and come away.'"

It is a sure token of ripeness when you are standing on tiptoe, with your wings outspread, ready for flight. When no chain any longer binds

you further to earth. When your love to things below is subordinate to your longing for the joys Above. Oh, it is sweet to sing with Dr. Watts--

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode;
I'd leave Your earthly courts, and flee
Up to Your seat, my God."

When we get to this in our very hearts, we are getting ripe, and we shall soon be gathered. The Master will not let His ripe fruit hang long on the tree. Thus I have given you the marks of ripeness.

II. Briefly, Brethren, let us notice THE CAUSES OF THIS RIPENESS. So gracious a result must have a gracious cause. The first cause of ripeness in Grace is the inward working of the sap. The fruit could never be ripe in its raw state were it taken away from the bough. Outward agencies alone may produce rottenness, but not ripeness. Sun, shower, whatnot, all would fail--it is the vital sap within the tree that perfects the fruit. It is especially so in Grace.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, are you one with Christ? Are you sure you are? Are you sure your profession is connected with vital godliness? Is Jesus Christ formed within you? Do you abide in Him? If not, you need not think about maturity in Grace--you had need to do your first works and repent--and turn unto Him. Everything between Hell and Heaven which denotes salvation is the work of the Spirit of God, and the work of the Grace of Jesus. You not only cannot begin to live the Christian life, but you cannot continue in it except as the Holy Spirit enables you. That blessed Spirit, flowing to us from Christ--as He is the Creator of the first blossom--so He is the Producer of the fruit, and is the Ripener of it until it is gathered into the heavenly garner. Your sacraments, your attendance at a place of worship, your outward bowings

of the knee in prayer--these are all vanity and less than nothing--unless there is this vital sap of the inward, spiritual Grace.

When the Truth of God is present in the hidden part, outer influences help. Fruit is ripened by the sun. His beams impart or produce in the fruit its perfectness of flavor. Sunless skies cause tasteless fruit.

How sweetly Christians grow when they walk in the light of God's Countenance! What a ripening influence the love of Jesus Christ has on the soul! When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, how rapidly the Christian advances! I believe we ripen in Grace more in ten minutes when we live near to God than we might do in ten years of absence from His Presence.

Some fruit on a tree will not ripen fast, it is shielded from the sun. We have the cottagers pluck off the leaves from their vines in our chilly climate in order to let the sun get at the vine, and bring out the color and ripeness of the clusters. Even thus the great Husbandman takes away many of the leaves of worldly comfort from us, that the comfort of His own dear Presence may come at us, and ripen us for Himself. We cannot have too much joy in the Lord, we cannot get too near to Him. We may well sing--

"When will You come unto me, Lord? O come, my Lord, most dear! Come near, come nearer, nearer still, I'm blessed when You are near."

The joy of the Lord is your strength, and the joy of the Lord is your perfectness.

Still, Brethren, the fruit is no doubt equally ripened, though not as evidently so, by the shower and by the dew. All heat and no moisture, and there must be scarcely any fruit. So the dew of God's Spirit falling upon us, the constant shower of Grace visiting us, and what if I add, even the trials and troubles of life, which are like showers to us--all these teach us by experience, and by experience we ripen for

the skies. Some fruit I have heard of, especially the sycamore fig, never will ripen except it is bruised.

It was the trade of Amos to be a bruiser of sycamore figs. They were struck with a long staff, and then after being wounded, they sweetened. How like so many of us! How many, many of us seem as if we never would be sweet till first we have been dipped in bitterness--never would be perfected till we have been smitten! We may trace many of our sharp trials, our bereavements and our bodily pains to the fact that we are such sour fruit. Nothing will ripen us but heavy blows. Blessed be the Lord that He does not spare us. We would be ripe even if we were struck again and again. We cannot be content to continue in our sourness and immaturity--therefore, we meekly bless Him that He will strike us and make us ripe.

One idea I would correct before I pass from this--it is the notion that ripeness in Grace is the necessary result of age. It is not so at all. Little children have been ripe for Glory! Yes, there have been authentic cases of their ripeness for Heaven even at three years of age--strange things dying babes have said of Christ--and deeply experimental things, too. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" the Lord not only brings childlike praise, but He has "perfected praise," or, as David has it, "You have ordained strength because of Your enemies." "Many an aged Christian is not an experienced Christian, for his experience--though it may be the experience of a Christian--may not have been Christian experience of an advanced kind.

An old sailor who has never left the river is not an experienced mariner. An old soldier who never saw a battle is no veteran. Remember it is in the kingdom of God very much as it is with God Himself, one day may be as a thousand years. God can, as Solomon tells us, give subtlety to the simple and teach the young man knowledge and

discretion. Years with Grace will produce greater maturity, but what I want to say is that years without Divine Grace will produce no such maturity. The mere lapse of time will not advance us in the Divine life. We do not ripen necessarily because our years fulfill their tale--gray hairs and great Grace are not inseparable companions. Time may be wasted as well as improved. We may be petrified rather than perfected by the flow of years. Here it may be well to note that there is no reason why a young Christian should not make great advance towards this maturity, even while young. The Lord's Grace is independent of time and age. The Holy Spirit is not limited by youth, nor restrained by fewness of days. Young Samuel may excel aged Eli. A holy babe is riper than a backsliding man. Timothy was more mature than Diotrephes.

Jesus can lead you, my youthful Brothers and Sisters, to high degrees of fellowship with Himself. He can make you to be a blessing even while yet you are young. I pray you aspire to the nearest place to Jesus, and like young John, lie in the Master's bosom. Truly, the aged have the help of experience, and in any case they deserve our reverent esteem. But let neither old nor young imagine that the merely natural fact of age has any influence in the spiritual life. God's work is the same in old and young, and owes nothing to the merely natural vigor of youth, or equally natural prudence of age.

III. Thus we have given you the causes of ripeness. Briefly let us show you THE DESIRABILITY OF RIPENESS IN GRACE. It is necessary to dwell on this head because many Christians appear to think that if they are just Believers it is enough. We do not in business think it enough if we barely escape bankruptcy. A man does not say, if his dear child has been ill in bed for years that it is quite enough so long as the child is alive.

We do not think that of our own bodies, that so long as we can breathe it is enough. If anyone were dragged out of the Serpentine and life was just in him, we should not feel it sufficient to discover the vital spark and there leave it. No, we pursue the processes of resuscitation till the person is perfectly restored. To be just alive as a Christian is horrid work. It is a poor state to be in to be always trying to see whether we are alive by putting the looking glass of evidences to the lips to see if there is just a trace of gracious vapor on the surface. It is a dolorous thing to be always groaning--

"It is 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?"

Yet too many are content to continue in this ignominious condition. Brethren, it is desirable that you should get out of it, and come to ripeness in Grace by God's Spirit, for, first, ultimate ripeness is an index of the health of your soul. The fruit which under proper circumstances does not ripen is not a good fruit--it must be an unwholesome production. Your soul can surely not be as it should be if it does not ripen under the influence of God's love and the work of His Grace. The gardener's reward is the ripe fruit. You desire that Christ should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied--do you think He will find that satisfaction in sour grapes? Is He to find His recompense in griping apples? No, Sir. The gardener wants the mature productions of the soil and he does not count that he has a return for his labor till he gathers ripe fruit. Let the Redeemer find ripe fruit in you. Say with the spouse, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." Endeavor to imitate her when she said, "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old,

which I have laid up for You, O Beloved." Present yourself to Him, and may He present you to the Father made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

It is the ripe fruit which proves the excellence of the tree. The tree may bear a name in very good repute, but if the fruit never ripens, very soon the gardener will remove it from the orchard. The Church's repute among wise men is gained not from her raw and green members, but from her ripe Believers--these are they by whose steadfast holiness those whose verdict is worth the having will be ruled. I would have men compelled to own that the Church is a goodly vine and her fruit most pleasant to the taste.

To break the metaphor, the Church wants mature Christians very greatly, and especially when there are many fresh converts added to it. New converts furnish impetus to the Church, but her backbone and substance must, under God, lie with the mature members. We want mature Christians in the army of Christ to play the part of veterans, to inspire the rest with coolness, courage, and steadfastness. For if the whole army is made up of raw recruits the tendency will be for them to waver when the onslaught is fiercer than usual.

The old guard, the men who have breathed smoke and eaten fire before, do not waver when the battle rages like a tempest--they can die but they cannot surrender. When they hear the cry of, "Forward," they may not rush to the front so nimbly as the younger soldiers, but they drag up the heavy artillery and their advance, once made, is secure. They do not reel when the shots fly thick, but still hold their own, for they remember former fights when Jehovah covered their heads.

The Church wants in these days of flimsiness and timeserving, more decided, thorough-going, well-instructed, and confirmed Believers. We are assailed by all sorts of new doctrines. The old faith is attacked

by so-called reformers who would reform it all away. I expect to hear tidings of some new doctrine once a week. So often as the moon changes, some "prophet" or other is moved to propound a new theory, and believe me, he will contend more valiantly for his novelty than ever he did for the Gospel! The discoverer thinks himself a modern Luther--and of his doctrine he thinks as much as David of Goliath's sword--"There is none like it."

As Martin Luther said of certain men in his day, these inventors of new doctrines stare at their discoveries like a cow at a new gate--as if there were nothing else in all the world but the one thing for them to stare at. We are all expected to go mad for their fashions, and march to their piping. But do we give place?--no, not for an hour! They may muster a troop of raw recruits, and lead them where they would--but for confirmed Believers they sound their bugles in vain. Children run after every new toy. Any little performance in the street, and the boys are all agog, gaping at it.

But their fathers have work to do abroad, and their mothers have other matters at home. Your drum and whistle will not draw them out. For the solidity of the Church, for her steadfastness in the faith, for her defense against the constantly recurring attacks of heretics and infidels. For her permanent advance and the seizing of fresh provinces for Christ

we want not only your young, hot bloods, which may God always send to us, for they are of immense service and we cannot do without them. But we need also the cool, steady, well-disciplined, deeply-experienced hearts of men who know by experience the Truth of God. Those that hold fast what they have learned in the school of Christ. May the Lord our God, therefore, send us many such. They are wanted.

IV. And now I shall close by calling your attention to THE GREAT

SOLEMNITY OF THE SUBJECT. We have tried to treat it pleasantly, and to instruct after the Master's example by parables, but there is much of weight here, much of deep and solemn weight. The first is to me, to you, professor of the faith of Christ, a solemn question--am I ripening?

I remember when a child, seeing on the mantel a stone apple, wonderfully like an apple, too, and very well colored. I saw that apple years after, but it was no riper. It had been in unfavorable circumstances for softening and sweetening, if it ever would have become mellow. But I do not think if the sun of the Equator had shone on it, or if the dews of Hermon had fallen on it, it would ever have been fit to be brought to table. Its hard marble substance would have broken a giant's teeth.

It was a hypocritical professor, a hard-hearted mocker of little children, a mere mimic of God's fruits. There are Church members who used to be unkind, covetous, censorious, bad-tempered, egotistical--everything that was hard and stony--are they so now? Have they not mellowed with the lapse of years? No, they are worse if anything--very dogs in the house for snapping and snarling, rending and devouring. They are great men at hewing down the carved work of the sanctuary with their axes, or at filling up wells and marring good pieces of land with stones. When the devil wants a stone to fling at a minister he is sure to use one of them.

Well, now, are these people Christians at all? Are they? Let your senses exercise themselves. I leave you each one to judge. If these are extreme cases, let me ask--are there not many in whom ripeness is certainly not very apparent? No growing downwards in humility, no growing upwards in fellowship with God, no doing more, no giving more, no loving more, no praying more, no praising more, no sympathizing

more. Are you, then, a fruit unto God at all? Solemn question! I put it to myself as in the sight of God, and I ask you to do the same to yourselves.

Another question also rises up. There is constantly going on in every man, specially in every professed Christian, some process or other. And I believe that one of two processes will go on in us--the one is ripening, the other is rotting. Now rotting and ripening are exceedingly like each other in appearance up to a certain stage. You will sometimes find upon your tree a fruit which seems perfectly ripe and has all the signs of ripeness a month before the proper time, outstripping thus all the other fruit.

You must not think it is ripe. Cut it open, there is a worm inside.

That noxious worm is to all appearances producing the same effect as the blessed sun and dew. So the worm of secret sin will eat out the heart of a professor, and yet it will outwardly produce in him the same quality of speech, the same apparent sanctity of life which the Holy Spirit truly produces in a real Christian--but still the fair outside conceals a foul interior. The whitewashed sepulcher is full of decay. That fruit which mimics ripeness is rotten. Leave it alone, and it will soon be a thing fit only for the dunghill.

My dear Friends, I have lived long enough, young as I am, to have seen some turn out to be very rotten hypocrites, though once they were in general esteem as more than ordinarily good men. I am sure we have all admired and loved persons who after awhile have turned out to be utterly unworthy. They looked the more ripe because they were rotten--they were obliged to try and look like holy men because they feared that their real unholiness would be found out.

Just as some failing merchants make all the greater show to conceal their insolvency--you will rot if you do not ripen, depend on it. He

that in the Church of God does not grow more heavenly will become more devilish. It is a hard thing to be in the hot house of an earnest Church without growing more rank if you do not grow more fruitful. Mind this, and God give you to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One other reflection, and a very solemn one it is. While good fruits ripen, evil plants ripen, too. While the wheat ripens for the harvest, the tares ripen, also. They may grow together, and ripen together, but they will not be housed together. Dear Hearers, some of you have been in this place now for years, and you are not converted. Well, you are ripening, you cannot help that. Even weeds and tares come to maturity. "Let both grow together till the harvest."

Look at these galleries and this vast area. I see before me three great fields of corn and tares. You are mingled while you grow. "Let both grow together till the harvest," that is the ripening and the dividing time. You are all growing, all

ripening. Then, when all are ripe in the time of harvest, He will say to the reapers, "Gather together first the tares, bind them in bundles to burn them. Gather the wheat into My barn."

O Sinner, your unbelief is ripening and it will ripen into despair! Your enmity to God is ripening and it will ripen into everlasting rebellion against Him. Even now your heart grows harder and more stubborn, and your death in sin becomes more hopeless every hour you live. Remember there shall be no hope that your character will undergo improvement in another world. Then shall be fulfilled the saying which is written, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Forever and forever the processes which ripen sin will continue to operate on condemned spirits, "where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." God grant you Grace to believe in Jesus Christ

NOW--that you may receive the new nature--and having received it, may grow up into ripeness, so that God may be glorified. May we all be housed in the garner of ripe fruit in the King's own Palace above! Amen and Amen.

Chapter 38

The Profit Of Godliness In The Life To Come

(No. 946)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8.

WE endeavored, this morning to prove the profitableness of godliness as to the life which now is, and to discriminate as to what the promise of this life really is. We tried to prove that "the promise" of the life that now is--its real and highest beauty and excellence--consists in peace of mind, peace with God, contentment, and happiness of spirit. And while we pointed out that godliness did not ensure wealth, or health, or even a good name--for all these, even to godly men, might not be granted--yet we showed that the great end of our being, that for which we live and were created, that which will best make it worth while to have existed, shall certainly be ours if we are godly.

We did not think it an unimportant matter to expound the bearing of true religion upon this present state. But I trust we did not exaggerate that view so as to keep those in countenance who dream that this world is the main consideration--and that the wisest man is he who makes it the be-all and the end-all of his existence.

Beloved Friends, there is another life beyond this fleeting existence. This fact was dimly guessed by heathens. Strange as their mythology might be, and singular as were their speculations us to the regions of bliss and woe, even barbarous nations have had some glimmering light concerning a region beyond the river of death. Hardly yet have we been

able to discover a people with no idea of an after-state. Man has scarcely ever been befooled into the belief that death is the finis of the volume of his existence.

Few, indeed, have been so lost to natural light as to have forgotten that man is something more than the dog which follows at his heel. That which was dimly guessed by the heathen was more fully worked out by the bolder and clearer minds among philosophers. They saw something about man that made him more than either ox or horse. They marked the moral government of God in the world, and as they saw the wicked prosper, and the righteous afflicted, they said, "There must be another state in which the GREAT AND JUST ONE will rectify all these wrongs--reward the righteous, and condemn the wicked."

They thought it proved that there would be another life. They could not, however, speak with confidence. For reason, however right her inferences, does not content the heart, or give "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen." That is reserved for faith. The best light of heathens was but twilight. Yet was there so much light in their obscurity that they looked beyond the stream of death and thought they saw shades as of creatures that had once been here and could not die. What was thus surmised and suspected by the great thinkers of antiquity has been brought to light in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He has declared to us that we shall live again, that there will be a Judgment and a Resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, and that there will be awarded to the righteous a reward that shall know no end, while the wicked shall be driven into a banishment to which there shall be no close. We are not left, now, to speculate nor to rely upon unaided reason. We have been told upon the authority of God, sometimes by the lips of Prophets, at other times by the lips of

His own dear Son, or by His inspired Apostles, that there is a world to come, a world of terrors to the ungodly, but a world of promised blessing to the righteous.

My dear Hearer, if it is so, what will the world to come be to you? Will you inherit its promise? You may easily answer that question by another. Have you godliness? If you have, you have the promise of the life that is to come. Are you ungodly? Do you live without God? Are you without faith in God, without love to God, without reverence to God? Are you without the pardon which God presents to believers in Christ Jesus? Then you are without hope, and the world to come has nothing for you but a fearful looking for ofjudgment and of fiery indignation which will devour you.

I. GODLINESS CONCERNING THE LIFE TO COME POSSESSES A PROMISE UNIQUE AND UNRIVALLED. I say a unique promise, for, observe--infidelity makes no promise of a life to come. It is the express business of infidelity to deny that there is such a life, and to blot out all the comfort which can be promised concerning it. Man is like a prisoner shut up in his cell, a cell all dark and cheerless unless there is a window through which he can gaze upon a glorious landscape. Infidelity comes like a demon into the cell, and with desperate hands blocks up the window, that man may sit forever in the dark, or at best may have the boasted light of a farthing rush-light called free-thinking. All that infidelity can tell him is that he will die like a dog. Fine prospect for a man who feels eternity pulsing within his spirit! I know I shall not die like the beast that perishes. And let who will propound the theory, my soul sickens and turns with disgust from it. Nor would it be possible by the most specious arguments so to pervert the instincts of my nature as to convince me that I shall thus die, and that my soul, like the flame of an out-burnt

candle, shall be quenched in utter annihilation.

My inmost heart revolts at this degrading slander. She feels an innate nobility that will not allow her to be numbered with the beasts of the field, to die as they must do without a hope. Oh, miserable prospect! How can men be so earnest in proclaiming their own wretchedness? Enthusiasts for annihilation? Why not fanatics for Hell itself? Godliness has promise of the life that is to come, but infidelity can do nothing better than deny the ennobling revelation of the great Father and bid us be content with the dark prospect of being exterminated and put out of being. Aspiring, thoughtful, rational Men--can you be content with the howling wildernesses and dreary voids of infidelity? Leave them, I pray you, for the goodly land of the Gospel which flows with milk and honey! Abandon extinction for immortality! Renounce perishing for Paradise!

Again, let me remark that this hope is unique because popery in any of its forms cannot promise us the life which is to come. I know that it speaks as positively as Christianity does about the fact that there will be another life. But it gives us no promise of it--for what is the expectation of the Romanist, even of the best Romanist? Have I not before remarked to you that we have heard--and therefore it is no slander for us to say it--of "masses" being said for the repose of the souls of the most eminent Romanists?

Cardinals distinguished for their learning, confessors and priests distinguished for their zeal, and even Popes reputed to be remarkable for holiness and even infallibility, have, when they died, gone somewhere! I know not where, but somewhere where they have needed that the faithful should pray for the repose of their souls! That is a very poor look-out for ordinary people like ourselves. For if these superlatively good people are still uneasy in their souls after they

die, and have in fact, according to their own statements, gone to purgatorial fires or to purgatorial chills--to be tossed, as certain of their prophets have informed us--from icebergs into furnaces, and then back again, until by some means, mechanical, spiritual, or otherwise, sin shall be burnt out, or evaporated from them. If that is their expectation, I think I should be inclined, as the Irishman said, to become a Protestant heretic, and go to Heaven at once, if there is so sorry a prospect for the Catholic.

Godliness has the promise of the life which is to come, but it is altogether unique in possessing such a promise. No voice from the Vatican sounds one-half so sweetly as that from Patmos, which we unabashedly accept--"I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. And their works do follow them." Our sorrow for the departed is not embittered by the absence of hope, for we believe that "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." Neither superstition on the one hand, nor unbelief on the other, so much as dares to offer a promise as to the life to come. No system based upon human merit ever gives its votaries a promise of the life to come which they can really grasp and be assured of. No self-righteous man will venture to speak of the assurance of faith. In fact, he denounces it as presumption. He feels that his own basis is insecure, and therefore he suspects the confidence of others to be as hollow as his own. He lives between hope and fear--a joyless, unsatisfied life. While the believer in Jesus, knowing that there is no condemnation to him, awaits the hour of his entrance into Heaven with joyful expectancy. What is never promised to man's fancied righteousness is secured to all who possess the righteousness of Christ Jesus. "Come, you blessed," is their assured welcome--to be with

Jesus--their entailed portion.

Godliness has a monopoly of heavenly promise as to the blessed future. There is nothing else beneath high Heaven to which any such promise has ever been given by God, or of which any such promise can be supposed. Look at vice, for instance, with its pretended pleasures--what does it offer you? It offers pleasure in the life that now is. But as it speaks, you detect the lie upon its face, for even in the life that now is vice gives but a hasty intoxication, to be followed by woe and redness of the eyes. It is true it satiates with sweets, but in all its tables there is vomit. Satiety follows its gluttony, dissatisfaction comes with discontent, loathing, remorse, and misery--like hounds at its heels.

Vice dares not say, it never has had the effrontery yet to say, "Do evil and live in sin, and eternal life will come out of it." No, the theater at its door does not proffer you eternal life--it invites you to the pit. The house of evil communications, the drunkard's settle, the gathering place of scorners, the chamber of the strange woman--none of these has yet dared to advertise a promise of eternal life as among the gifts that may tempt its votaries. At best, sin gives you but bubbles, and feeds you upon air. The pleasure vanishes, and the misery is left. Even this side of the tomb the hollowness of sinful mirth is clear to all but the most superficial, and he said truly who sang concerning merry worldlings --

"They grin. But why? And how long the laugh?
Half ignorance, their mirth. And half a lie
To cheat the world, and cheat themselves, they smile.
Hard either task! The most abandoned own
That others, if abandoned, are undone--
Then, for themselves, the moment reason wakes,

Oh, how laborious is their gaiety!

They scarce can swallow their ebullient spleen,

Scarce muster patience to support the farce,

And pump sad laughter till the curtain falls.

Scarce did I say? Some cannot sit it out;

Oft their own daring hand the curtain draws,

And shows us what is their joy by their despair." If such is the failure of the mirth of fools this side of eternity, of what little benefit can it prove hereafter?

So with other things not sinful in themselves--there is no promise of the life that is to come appended to them. For instance, birth. What would not some men give if they could but somehow trace their pedigree up to a distinguished Crusader, or up to a Norman knight reported of in the battle-roll of Hastings? Yet, nowhere in the world is there a promise of eternal life to blood and birth. "For when he dies he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise you, when you do well to yourself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers. They shall never see light."

Genealogies and pedigrees are poor things. Trace us all up far enough, and we are all descended from that naked sinner who tried to cover his shame with fig leaves, and owed his first true garment to the charity of offended Heaven. Let the pedigree run through the loins of kings, yes, and of mighty kings, and let every one of our forefathers have been distinguished for his valor--yet no man shall pretend, because of this, that eternal life will be secured thereby. Ah, no. The king rots like a slave and the hero is devoured by the worm as though he had been but a swineherd all his days. Yes, and the flame unquenchable kindles an earl, and duke, and millionaire, as well as a serf and peasant.

And it is equally certain that no promise of the life that is to come is given to wealth. Men hoard it, and gather it, and keep it, and seal it down by bonds and settlements as if they thought they could carry some thing with them. But when they have gained their utmost, they do not find that wealth has the promise even of this life, for it yields small contentment to the man who possesses it. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abides not."

As for the life to come, is there any supposable connection between the millions of the miser's wealth and the glory that is to be revealed hereafter? No, but by so much more as the man lives for this world, by so much more shall he be accursed. He said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater." But God calls him a fool, and a fool he is, for when his soul is required of him, whose shall these things be which he had prepared? No, you may grasp the Indies if you will. You may seek to contain within your estates all the lands that you can see far and wide, but you shall be none the nearer to Heaven when you have reached the climax of your avarice. There is no promise of the life that is to come in the pursuits of usury and covetousness.

Nor is there any such promise to personal accomplishments and beauty. How many live for that poor bodily form of theirs which so soon must molder back to the dust! To dress, to adorn themselves, to catch the glance of the admirer's eye, to satisfy public taste, to follow fashion! Surely an object in life more frivolous never engrossed an immortal soul. It seems as strange as if an angel should be gathering daisies or blowing soap bubbles! An immortal spirit living to dress the body! To paint, to dye, to display a ribbon, to dispose a pin--is this the pursuit of an immortal? Yet tens of thousands live for little else.

But ah, there is no promise of the life to come appended to the most noble beauty that ever fascinated the eye. Far deeper than the skin is the beauty which is admired in Heaven.

As for earth's comeliness, how do time, and death, and the worm together make havoc of it! Take up yonder skull, just upturned by the sexton's careless spade, "and get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, though she paint an inch thick, to this complexion she must come at last." All her dressing shall end in a shroud, and all her washings and her

dainty ornaments shall only make her but the sweeter morsel for the worm. There is no promise of the life to come to these

frivolities--why, then, waste your time and degrade your souls with them?

Nor even to higher accomplishments than these is there given any promise of the life to come. For instance, the attainment of learning, or the possession of that which often stands men in as good place as learning, namely, cleverness, brings therewith no promise of future bliss. If a man is clever, if he can write interesting stories, if he can sketch the current fashions, if he can produce poetry that will survive among his fellow men--it matters not. Though his pen never wrote a line for Christ, and though he never uttered a sentence that might have led a sinner to the Cross. Though his work had no aim beyond this life, and paid no homage to the God of the Gospel, yet even professed Christians will fall at the man's feet! And when he dies, will canonize him as a saint, and almost worship him as a Demigod!

I reckon the meanest Christian that loved his God, though he could only speak with a stammer the profession of his faith, is nobler far than he who possessed the genius of a Byron or the greatness of a Shakespeare who only used his ten talents for himself and for his follow men, but

never consecrated them to the great Master to whom the interest of them altogether belonged. No. There is no promise of the life that is to come to the philosopher, or to the statesman, or to the poet, or to the literary man, as such. They have no preference before the Lord. Not gifts but Divine Grace must save them. Humbly, penitently, and believingly they must find the promise of eternal life in godliness. And if they have not godliness, they shall find it nowhere.

Godliness has that promise, I say, and none besides. I saw in Italy standing at the corner of a road, as you may frequently see in Italy, a large Cross, and on it were these words, which I had not often seen on a Cross before--"Spes unica"--the only hope, the one unique hope, the one only hope of mankind. So would I tell you that on Christ's Cross there is written this day, "Spes unica"--the one hope of men.

"Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." To nothing else anywhere--search for it high or low, on earth or sea--to nothing else is the promise given save to godliness alone.

II. I pass on to notice, in the second place, that THE PROMISE GIVEN TO GODLINESS IS AS COMPREHENSIVE AS IT IS UNIQUE. I have not time on this occasion to go into all the promises of the life that is to come which belong to godliness--who shall give an inventory where the treasure is boundless, or map out a land which has no limit? It will suffice if I give you the heads of this great theme. That promise is something of this kind. The godly man, unless Christ shall come, will die as others die, as to the matter of outward fact, but his death will be very different in its essence and meaning.

He will pass gently out of this world into the world to come, and then, at that instant, he will begin to realize the promise which godliness gave him. For he will enter then, no, he has entered now, upon an

eternal life far other than that which belongs to other men. The Christian's life shall never be destroyed--"Because I live, you shall live also," says Christ. There is no fear of the Christian's ever growing aged in Heaven, or of his powers failing him. Eternal youth shall be to those who wear the unfading crown of life. Yon sun shall become black as a coal. yonder moon shall fail until her pale beams shall never more be seen. The stars shall fall like withered figs--even this earth, which we call stable, terming it terra firma, shall, with yonder heavens, be rolled up like a vestment that is worn out, and shall be laid aside among the things that were, but are not. Everything which can be seen is but a fruit with a worm at the core, a flower doomed to fade. But the Believer shall live forever, his life shall be coeval with the years of the Most High. God lives ever, ever, ever, and so shall every godly soul. Christ, having given him eternal life, he is one with Jesus, and as Jesus lives forever, even so shall he. In the moment of death the Christian will begin to enjoy this eternal life in the form of wonderful felicity in the company of Christ, in the Presence of God, in the society of disembodied spirits and holy angels. I say in a moment, for from the case of the dying thief we learn that there is no wait upon the road from earth to Heaven--

"One gentle sigh the fetter breaks--
We scarce can say, 'He'sgone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne."

How does Paul put it? "Absent from the body." But you have hardly said that word, when he adds, "present with the Lord." The eyes are closed on earth and opened again in Heaven! They loose their anchor, and immediately they come to the desired haven. How long that state of

disembodied happiness shall last it is not for us to know, but by-and-by, when the fullness of time shall come, the Lord Jesus shall consummate all things by the resurrection of these bodies. The trumpet shall sound, and as Jesus Christ's body rose from the dead as the first fruits, so shall we arise, every man in his own order.

Raised up by Divine power, our very bodies shall be reunited with our souls to live with Christ, raised however, not as they shall be put into the grave to slumber, but in a nobler image. They were sown like the shriveled seed, they shall come up like the fair flowers which decorate your summer gardens. Planted as a dull unattractive bulb, to develop into a glory like that of a lovely lily with snowy cup and petals of gold. Sown like the shriveled barley or wheat, to come up as a fair green blade, or to become the golden ear. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when He shall appear we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is."

Come, my Soul, what a promise is given you in God's Word of the life that is to come! A promise for my soul, did I say? A promise for my body, too. These aches and pains shall be repaid. This weariness and these sicknesses shall all be recompensed. The body shall be remarried to the soul, from which it parted with so much grief, and the marriage shall be the more joyous because there never shall be another divorce. Then, in body and in soul made perfect, the fullness of our bliss shall have arrived.

But will there not be a judgment? Yes, a judgment certainly. And if not in set ceremonial, a judgment for the righteous, as some think, yet in spirit certainly. We shall gather at the Great White Throne, gather with the goats or gather with the sheep. But there is this promise to you who are godly, that you shall have nothing to fear in that Day of Judg-ment--you shall go to it with the blood-bought pardon in your

bosom, to be shown before the Judgment Seat. You shall go to that judgment to have it proclaimed to men, to angels, and to devils, that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," none being able to lay anything to the charge of those for whom Jesus Christ has died, and whom the Father justifies.

You need not fear the judgment, you need not fear the conflagration of the world, or whatever else of terror shall be attendant upon the coming of Christ as a thief in the night. You have the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Listen to me! You have the promise that you shall enjoy forever the high dignity of being priests and kings unto God. You sons of toil, you daughters of poverty--you shall be peers in Heaven, you shall be courtiers of the Prince Imperial--yourselves being princes of the royal blood!

Your heads shall wear crowns, your hands shall wave palms of triumph. And as you shall have glorious rank, so shall you have companions suitable to your condition. The worldling's haunt, the synagogue of Satan, shall be far away from you. No more shall you sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar. No idle talk shall vex you, no blasphemies shall inflict themselves upon your ears. You shall hear the songs of angels. And as they charm you, you shall also charm them by making known unto them the manifold wisdom of God. The holiest and best of men, redeemed by Jesus' precious blood, shall commune with you, and, best of all --

"He that on the Throne does reign You for evermore shall He feed; With the tree of life sustain, To the living fountain lead."

You shall have unbroken fellowship with God and with His Christ. What ravishing joy this will be! We shall better be able to experience than to imagine. Communion with Jesus here below uplifts us far above the world, but what its delights are in the unclouded skies of face-to-face

fellowship, has not yet entered into the heart of man.

Hearken yet more, Beloved. You shall have suitable occupation. I know not what you may have to do in Heaven, but I do know it is written, "They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads, and His servants shall serve Him." They serve Him day and night in His Temple. You would not be happy without occupation. Minds made like yours could not find rest except upon the wing--delightful and honorable employment shall be allotted you--suitable to your perfected capabilities. But, mark you, you shall have rest as well as service. No wave of trouble shall roll over your peaceful bosoms. You shall forever bathe your souls in seas of blissful rest--no care, no fear, no unsatisfied desire. For all desires shall be consummated, all expectations be fulfilled. God shall be your Portion, the infinite Spirit your Friend, and the ever-blessed Christ your elder Brother.

Into the joy of Heaven, which knows no bounds, shall you enter, according to His Words, "Enter you into the joy of your Lord." And all this, and infinitely more than my tongue can tell you, shall be yours forever and forever, without fear of ever losing it, or dread of dying in the midst of it. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love Him, but He has revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

All the kingdom which the Father has prepared, and the place which the Son has prepared, are yours, O Believer, by the promise of the Lord. For "whom He justified, them He also glorified."

The promise goes with godliness, and if you have godliness there is nothing in Heaven of joy, there is nothing there of honor, there is nothing there of rest and peace--which is not yours. For godliness has the promise of it, and God's promise never fails--

"Lo! I see the fair immortals, Enter to the blissful seats;

Glory opens her waiting portals, And the Savior's train admits. All the chosen of the Father, All for whom the Lamb was slain, All the Church appear together,

Washed from every sinful stain. His dear smile the place enlightens
More than thousand suns could do; All around, His Presence brightens,
Changeless, yet forever new. Blessed state! Beyond conception!
Who its vast delights can tell? May it be my blissful portion,
With my Savior there to dwell."

Perhaps within the next ten minutes we may be there! Who knows? I had half said, "God grant it to me!" No doubt, many anxious spirits would be glad to end so soon life's weary journey and rest in the Fathers Home!

III. Now, very briefly, consider another point. I have shown you that the promise appended to godliness is unique and comprehensive, and now observe that IT IS SURE. "Godliness has promise." That is to say, it has God's promise. Now, God's promise is firmer than the hills. He is God, and cannot lie. He will never retract the promise, nor will He leave it unfulfilled. He was too wise to give a rash promise--He is too powerful to be unable to fulfill it. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?"

Already tens of thousands to whom the promise was made have obtained a measure of this bliss in the glorification of their perfect spirits. We are on the road to the same happy state. Some of us are on the river's brink. Perhaps the Lord may come suddenly, and we shall be changed, and so perfected without dying. Be that as the Lord wills, it is not a question which disturbs us. By God's Grace, our faith is strong and firm. We are sure that we, too, shall enter into the rest which remains, and with all the blood-washed multitude shall in wonder and surprise adore the God before whose Throne we shall cast our crowns.

IV. But I shall not tarry upon that, for there comes a fourth thought.

This promise is A PRESENT PROMISE. You should notice the participle, "having promise." It does not say that godliness after awhile will get the promise, but godliness has promise now--at this very moment. My dear Hearer, if you are godly, that is, if you have submitted to God's way of salvation. If you trust God, love God, serve God--if you are, in fact, a converted man--you have NOW the promise of the life that is to come. When we get a man's promise in whom we trust, we feel quite easy about the matter under concern. A note of hand from many a firm in the city of London would pass current for gold any day in the week.

And surely when God gives the promise, it is safe and right for us to accept it as if it were the fulfillment itself, for it is quite as sure. We have the promise, let us begin to sing about it! What is more, we have a part of the fulfillment of it, for, "I give unto My sheep eternal life," says Christ--shall we not sing concerning that? Believe in Jesus--you have eternal life NOW. There will be no new life given to you after death. You have even NOW, O Christian, the germ within you which will develop into the Glory-life above. Grace is Glory in the bud. You have the earnest of the Spirit. You have already a portion of the promise which is given to godliness.

Now, what you should do is to live now in the enjoyment of the promise. You cannot enjoy Heaven, for you are not there, but you can enjoy the promise of it, Many a dear child, if it has a promise of a treat in a week's time, will go skipping among its little companions as merry as a lark about it. It has not the treat yet, but it expects it. And I have known in our Sunday schools our little boys and girls, months before the time came for them to go into the country, as happy as the days were long, in prospect of that little pleasure. Surely you and I ought to be childlike enough to begin to rejoice in the Heaven that is so

soon to be ours! I know tomorrow some of you will be working very hard, but you may sing--

"This is not my place of resting, Mine's a city yet to come; Onward to it I am hasting On to my eternal home."

Perhaps you will have to fight the world's battles, and you will find them very stern. Oh, but you can sing even now of the palm branch, and of the victory that awaits you! And as your faith looks at the crown that Christ has prepared for it, you will be much rested even in the heat of the battle. When a traveler who has been long an exile returns home, it may be after walking many miles he at last gets to the brow of the hill where he can see the Church of the little town, and get a bird's-eye view of the parish. He gazes awhile, and as he looks again and again, says to himself, "Yes, that is the High Street there, and yonder is the turning by the old inn, and there--yes, there, I can see the gable of the dear old house at home."

Though his feet may be blistered, the way may have been long, and the sweat may be pouring from his face, yet he plucks up courage at the sight of home. The last mile down hill is soon over, for he has seen his long-loved home. Christians, you may see it, you may see the goodly land from Nebo even now--

"How near
At times to faith's far-seeing eye, The golden gates appear!"

When the Crusaders first came in sight of Jerusalem, though they had a hard battle before them before they could win it, yet they fell down in ecstasy at the sight of the holy city. And do not you and I say,

"Soldiers of the Cross, my fellow Crusaders in the holy war of righteousness, will you not in prospect of the coming glory sing--

OO my sweet home, Jerusalem,
Would God I were in you!

Would God my woes were at an end,

Your joys that I might see!'?"

When the brave soldiers, of whom Xenophon tells us, came at last in sight of the sea, from which they had been so long separated, they cried out, "Thallasse! Thallasse!"--"The sea! The sea!" And we, though death appears between us and the better land, can yet look beyond it and see the--

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood

Arrayed in living green,"

and bless God that a sight of what is to be revealed renders the burdens of the way light as we march towards Glory. Oh, live, live in the foretaste of Heaven. Let worldlings see that--

"The thought of such amazing bliss

Does constant joys create."

V. Last of all. This promise which is appended to godliness is A VERY NEEDFUL ONE. It is a very necessary one, for ah, if I have no promise of the life that is to come, where am I? Where am I? And where shall I be? Where shall I be? I live, I know. I die, I know I must. And if it all is true as this old Bible, my mother's Bible, tells me--that there is a hereafter. If I have no godliness, then woe is the day to me! Oh, how much I want the promise of the life to come, for if I have not that I have a curse for the life to come.

I cannot die, God has made my soul immortal. Even God Himself will never annihilate me, for He has been pleased to create me an immortal spirit, and on I must live forever. There are some who say, and I think the doctrine is full of unnumbered perils to the souls of men, that God made man naturally mortal, and the soul can become extinct. And they go on to teach that sinners are made to live after death on purpose to be tormented for a longer or shorter time, and then at last are

annihilated. What a God must He be to give them a life they need not have--on purpose--that He might torment them! I know no such God. But HE, whom I adore, in His unbounded goodness, gave to mankind what was in itself a wondrous blessing-- immortality. And if you, my Hearer, choose to turn it into a curse forever, it is you that are to be blamed for it! Not God who gave you the immortality which, if you believe in the appointed Savior, will be to you an eternity of bliss. You are now past all recall an immortal being, and if you die without hope in Christ there will remain only this for you--to go on sinning in another state as you have gone on sinning here. But you will get no pleasure from it as you think you do sometimes, here--on the contrary, you will be tortured with remorse concerning it. And you will be vexed with angry passions to think that you cannot have your will, passions that will make you struggle yet worse against your God, and make your misery consequently the greater.

The worm that never dies will be your own furious hatred of God. The fire that never shall be quenched is probably the flames of your own insatiate lust after evil. I say not that there will not be bodily pains, but the natural results of sin are the deepest Hell to the soul. Sin has made you unhappy now. It will ripen. It will increase. When everything that checks it shall be taken off, your true character will be developed, and with that development will come enlarging wretchedness. Separated from the company of the righteous, and placed among the wicked, you will go on to be worse and worse, and every stop in the increase of sin necessitates an increase of misery.

It is not true that God will punish you in mere caprice. He has ordained, and right enough was He to ordain it, that sin should punish itself--that sin should be its own misery, and its own anguish. Sin will be to you a never-ending death. O why will you die? Why will you

die? Why will you, by the love of sin, bring upon yourselves an eternity of sin, an eternity of suffering? Turn unto Christ! I pray His Spirit to turn you. Come now, come now, and lay hold on eternal life!

I have been thinking while I have been preaching to you, this evening, of my own self, awhile, and I shall turn my thoughts to myself and any others who are preachers or teachers, and who try to do good to others. Years ago Hamburgh was nearly half of it burned down, and among the incidents that happened, there was this one. A large house had connected with it a yard in which there was a great black dog, and this black dog in the middle of the night barked and howled most furiously. It was only by his barking that the family was awakened just in time to escape from the flames, and their lives were spared.

But the poor dog was chained to his kennel, and though he barked and thus saved the lives of others, he was burned himself. Oh, do not you, who work for God in this Church, perish in that fashion! Do not permit your sins to enchain you, so that while you warn others, you become lost yourselves! See to it that you have the godliness which has the promise of the life that is to come.

And now, you who really desire to find godliness, remember, it is to be had in Christ, and only in Christ. I was in Windermere some three weeks ago on a hot, dusty day, and I saw a little gushing stream of water, and a chain with a ladle to it for the passerby to drink. I wanted to drink, and I went to it, but the ladle was cracked quite through, was very rusty, and would not hold a drop of water. Neither was the water, if it had been held in it, fit to drink. There are ways of salvation chosen by some that are equally as deceptive. They mock the traveler. But oh, my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, is a river of mercy, deep and broad. You have but to stoop and drink, and you may drink as much as you will, and none shall tell you stop. Have you not His Word for it,

"Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"? God grant you may with your heart believe the Gospel of Jesus, for our heart believes the Gospel of Jesus, for Christ's sake.

[Sermon #937, The Profit of Godliness in This Life, is the sermon Brother Spurgeon alluded to at the beginning of this sermon.]

Chapter 39

Seeking For Jesus

(No. 947)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 21, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Seeking for Jesus." John 6:24.

THE persons who are here described as seeking for Jesus were looking after Him from a very mean and selfish motive--not because of the gracious words which He spoke, nor to render Him thanks for benefits received at His hands-- but merely because they had eaten of the loaves and fishes, and hoped to do so again. From such sordid motives let us flee. May we all shun with detestation the very idea of making a profession of religion for the sake of worldly advantage. It is detestable to the last degree. Those who seek Jesus Christ with the groveling desire to make a gain of godliness are hypocrites of the meanest order.

Like Judas they will follow the Lord while they can steal from the bag, and like that "son of perdition," they will sell Him when the thirty pieces of silver are the reward of treachery. Let them know that such gain will involve their souls' eternal loss.

I shall apply the words before us to those who really and spiritually seek Jesus, seek Him as Jesus--the Savior who saves His people from their sins. Last Sunday morning I tried to speak concerning maturity in Grace, giving the advanced Believer a word. And as we are bound to give a portion of meat in due season to all classes, I will now deal with those who are but babes in Grace, if indeed they are babes at all. I shall speak to those who cannot say, "We have found Him," but who are

earnestly "seeking for Jesus."

I. First, let us notice THE CHARACTER OF THE STATE described as "seeking for Jesus." In it there is a mingling of good and evil. We see in it much of light, but too much of darkness. It is neither day nor night, a dim twilight, hopeful but overclouded. I may call it "not light, but darkness visible." It is one of those miry places, a marsh, not altogether sea, and certainly not land. Like the brackish water of the river's mouth, not altogether salt, but assuredly not sweet. "Seeking for Jesus" has a large amount of hopefulness in it. It is as the almond tree in blossom, though as yet there is no fruit. The seeker at any rate is not indifferent now. He is not a careless sluggard, demanding yet more sleep and folding of the hands. He is not a defiant rebel, daring the wrath of God with blasphemous audacity. He is no longer a denier of Revelation. He would not be seeking for Jesus unless he had some kind of faith--at any rate, a theoretical faith--in a Savior, and in his need of Him.

Now it is a very encouraging sign when we see men aroused and willing to hear. When we can bring men to think, we are very grateful, for thoughtfulness lies on the road to conviction of sin, and conviction is on the way to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I am glad, my dear Friend, that you are now no longer deaf to the appeals of God's Word. It is well that your ears are open, and though as yet what you hear is far from bringing you any comfort, rest assured it is a great blessing to you to hear the Truth of God, even when it condemns you. I rejoice to see you under concern and I hope that something may come of it. Your face is now turned in the right direction, now that you are "seeking for Jesus." When you sought sinful pleasure you were facing the pit of Hell--now your face is heavenward. I am glad that Jesus is the Object of your search, for depend upon it, nothing else is worth

seeking for--salvation from sin and Hell should be the first object of your soul's desire. For an alarmed and awakened sinner to seek rest in ceremonies will be a search for bread among ashes. To labor for salvation by your own righteousness will be looking for substance among dreams.

Your seeking after Jesus shows that you are on the right tack, and though as yet you have not reached the haven, the helm is set in the right direction, and I am grateful to God for it and encouraged concerning you. I regard your present state as the little cloud which foretells the coming rain. But, alas, I may be disappointed, and the early cloud may melt into nothingness! Hope tells a flattering tale, but she may be deceived. What a pleasing sight it is to see a man who has formerly been prayerless casting himself upon his knees in secret! How gratifying to see the unread Bible brought out from the dust and carefully studied! Methinks an angel must look on with holy interest when he sees the fresh tear fall in the solitary chamber, and the unaccustomed suppliant bow before his God. Glad are those blessed spirits when they hear the seeker say, "O God, I will seek You until I find You. I will cry unto You till I receive an answer of peace." Intelligence of such a vow would make a Church rejoice in hope--trusting that the time for newborn children of God to be found in her midst was fully come. A heart that turns itself to Christ if haply it may find Him, is evidently in a hopeful condition. Yet in the state of "seeking for Jesus" there is much that is doubtful, for, my Brethren, the seeker after Christ remains disobedient to the great command of the Gospel. If he were obedient to the great Gospel precept, he would at once cease to be a seeker, and become a happy finder. What is the command of the Gospel? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Properly speaking, Christ is not an object for

seeking, He is not far from any of us--like the brazen serpent uplifted by Moses, He is not so much to be looked for as looked at. We have neither to clamber to Heaven to find Him in the loftiness of His Deity, to bring Him down--nor dive into the chambers of Hades to bring Him up again from the dead.

Thus says the Lord, "The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith, which we preach. That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. A prayer will reach Him, a wish will find Him, a groan will pierce His heart--do but confide in Him and He is yours.

The first command of the Gospel to guilty sinners is not to pray, to search the Scriptures, to attend upon sermons-- all these are natural duties--and woe unto the man who neglects any of them. But the command, the special command of the Gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!" Now, the seeking sinner is disobedient to the command. He is going about here and there seeking, but he declines trusting. He is eagerly looking abroad for that which is at home.

He is seeking for peace afar off when it is near him. He looks east and west to behold a wonder, while the Wonderful, the Savior, stands at his right hand ready to forgive. The way of salvation for me as a sinner is simply this, that I, being a sinner, do now put my trust in Christ Jesus the Substitute for sinners. God has set forth His crucified Son as the accepted Propitiation for sin--the way of salvation is that I accept Him for what God has set Him forth--namely, as the Atonement for my sin, in which I place my sole reliance.

Seeing He is God, seeing He took upon Himself the nature of man, seeing that as Mediator He suffered in the place of as many as trust in Him, I

trust Him, and I obtain thereby the blessed result of His sufferings--I am, in fact, thereby saved. Now, it is some good thing certainly to be a seeker, but it is also an ill thing if I follow my seeking and refuse God's way of salvation.

Hear what the Apostle John says--"He that believes not God has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." This is no small sin to be guilty of, and it entails no small punishment, for "he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Suppose that I have been told of a remedy for my disease. Well, it is very good that I desire to be cured of my deadly malady, it is so far hopeful that I have sent for a physician. But after being informed that there is the one specific remedy for my disease, and that it alone will certainly heal me--if I were still to continue seeking a remedy, or to say I am seeking this one true remedy--I shall remain sick, and ultimately die. I shall never be healed unless I take that which is pre-scribed--to seek it is not enough, I must actually take it.

In seeking, then, there is some good, but oh, how much of evil! Here are gleams and flashes of light, but oh, how dense is the darkness! Here is a little smoke in the flax, but I dare scarcely call it a spark. O Seeker for Jesus, think of this, for while I would not discourage you, yet would I encourage you to end your seeking by becoming a Believer. Look not at salvation's cup, but drink of it. Stand not by the fountain's brim, but wash in it and be clean. O may the Holy Spirit lead you to cease your search for goodly pearls, for the Pearl of Great Price is before you! Jesus is not to be discovered as a secret--He stands before you openly. Behold His hands and His feet! Mark well His torn side, and as you look, TRUST--and from now on He is all your own!

Hear, dear Friend, your true position. It is the case of a soldier on the battlefield, wounded, bleeding, life oozing away from him. He is perishing, but he is sufficiently sensible to know it and to call for help. The surgeon is on the field within hearing, the sufferer pleads for relief with many cries and entreaties. So far, so good. But I pray you remember that crying and weeping will not of themselves heal the sick man--the surgeon must actually come and bind up his wounds. And if he refuses to receive him, he may cry as he wills, but he will bleed to death.

So remember that your prayers and seeking, of themselves, cannot save you--Jesus must come to you, and it is madness on your part to refuse Him by your unbelief. To give another similitude--you are today like the manslayer of old, you have done the murderous deed, vengeance is armed against you. Judgment, swift as lightning pursues you. You are not now slumbering in foolish security, or presumptuously defying the avenger, but happily you are so aroused that you are running towards the City of Refuge.

I delight to mark your earnest running, but run as you may, you are not safe until you are within the city gate. The most vigorous running will not save you if it does not end within the walls of refuge. To enter that open gate, to dwell within that sheltering wall, to enjoy the privilege of sanctuary--this is safety. All else is but hope of escape, and not deliverance itself. To pray, to hear, to desire, to seek--all this is the roadway and the running, but Christ Himself must be laid hold upon by faith--or we are not saved.

Run, Man, but oh, take care that you run in God's way--by faith in Jesus--and not by trusting in your resolves and feelings! You must have Christ to be yours by personal faith, or you must die eternally. Let me give yet another picture. You are like one who has been asleep in a

burning house. At last you are awakened. The cries of those who would gladly save you have broken your deadly slumber. You start up in horror. I think I see you now at the upper window, with the flames drawing near to you. You clearly perceive your danger, you passionately clamor for aid. All your energies are aroused.

So far, so good. But, Man, all this will not rescue you--you must get on the fire escape which is now uplifted to the window. Are you unwilling to take the one and only way of escape? It is close to you. It is suitable, it is efficient! Why seek another? There it is, and precisely what you need. Your present alarm will only be the prelude of your despair if you put from you the way of escape. I put these figures before you that you may see that while you are only seeking for Jesus, your best friends dare not altogether hope for you, but are led to tremble, too.

We wonder which way the scale will turn--your future quivers in the balances. As anxious eyes watch a laboring boat making with difficulty for port, and in imminent danger of the rocks, so we watch you. We see you like Lot and his family, ready to leave the City of Destruction, but you have not yet reached the mountain, and our heart asks concerning you, "Will he linger in the plain? Will he look back? Or will he altogether be delivered?"

If you remain as you are, there is no hope for you. All the supposed good which is now in you is vanity itself if it leaves you short of Christ. Remember well this verse, and I will pass on--

"Why those fears, poor seeking sinner.9 Why those anxious, gloomy fears.9 Sighs and sorrows cannot save you, Healing dwells not in your tears; It is BELIEVING Which the soul to Christ endears."

II. The second part of our discourse shall deal with THE PERPLEXITIES OF THIS STATE. "Seeking for Jesus" is a state of heart in which the

poor soul is usually very much put to it--"tumbled up and down in his thoughts," as John Bunyan would say. For first, seekers are very often much perplexed as the result of their ignorance of the way of salvation. Too often, awakened souls, though they may have heard the Gospel, do not in their hearts understand it. Many enquirers do not know what faith is.

I am persuaded millions of our fellow countrymen do not know what believing in Jesus means. Though every Sunday they are told, yet they do not catch the thought, for the Spirit of God has not illuminated their minds. To believe in Jesus, as we say again, and again, and again, is simply to trust in Jesus--to take God at His Word--to take Christ for what God says He is, namely, the Atonement, the satisfaction for sin, the Savior of sinners.

But poor, troubled consciences think faith is a deep mystery, and they go about like blind men groping for the wall. They wander like travelers in a dense fog, not knowing which way leads to their homes--hoping, but hoping against hope, by reason of ignorance. Many, though desirous to be saved, do not understand the work of Christ, or know what Atonement is. Though the doctrine of Substitution, which is the very marrow of the Gospel, is to Believers so very plain, yet many seekers have not learned it.

That Jesus bore the sin of His people--that "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." That He was made sin for us. That Justice received its due at His hands. This precious fact many penitent sinners have not grasped. They still think there is so much repentance to do, so much feeling to endure, so much praying to go through, so much mystery to be experienced. But the plain, simple precept, "Believe and live," trust and be accepted, hide under the shadow of the Cross and be safe--this, through ignorance, they do not understand--and this

involves them in trouble upon trouble, till their way is hedged up with thorns.

At such times, too, to increase their perplexity, they are usually distracted with fear. Persons in a panic act generally in the worst conceivable manner for their own safety, and an awakened sinner is in much the same condition. A terrible sound is in his ears--he hears the rumbling of the everlasting tempest--he sees the gathering storm. He knows not what to do, nor where to flee. His sins, which once appeared such trifles, now rise before him like mountains of blackness. The wrath of God, which once he defied, makes him exceedingly fear and quake.

He sees the dark record of his transgressions and anticipates the hour when all his sins shall be read before the assembled universe, and the sentence of wrath shall go forth against him. To where shall he flee? He scarcely knows how or where to fly. A spirit distracted with dread is never a wise spirit, and often is goaded on to madness. Pressed out of measure with forebodings of heart and threats of conscience, many a man refusing to believe in Jesus has laid violent hands upon himself.

Do you wonder, then, that souls under a sense of sin and fear of wrath, are far from being calm and collected, but rather are like mariners in a storm who "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man"? How soon would their bewilderment end in sweet repose if they would obey the Divine mandate and accept the great salvation! During these struggles for life the mind is usually harassed with a thousand questions. The newly-awakened mind is very apt to lose itself in the many spiritual problems which lie before it. The man cared nothing for these matters before, but now he has even a morbid craving after knowledge!

He seems as if he could not learn too much or too fast. How many an enquirer, instead of turning to the Cross, worries himself with

intricacies of doctrine, vexed points which belong to metaphysics rather than to divinity! They are fascinated by the "things hard to be understood," and forget the Truths of God which a wayfaring man, though a fool, may readily comprehend. How many ask themselves, "Are we elect?" when their enquiry should be, "How can a man be cleansed from iniquity?"

In truth, they must learn Latin and Greek before they know their letters, and must fathom the doctrine of election before they will believe in the redemption of Jesus. They would come to the Father before they have come to the Son, and learn their predestination before their pardon. That which has perplexed the wisest of men, namely, how to reconcile Divine ordination with the free agency of man, they attempt to grapple with while they are in danger of the unquenchable fire.

They philosophize at Hell's mouth, and debate in the jaws of perdition. You may show them how absurd it is, as absurd as a drowning man to wish to quibble about hydraulics, and refuse to lay hold on the friendly rope until he understands some mystery in hydrostatics. Or, as if a person sorely sick refused all surgery until he understood anatomy, and comprehended the secret influences of drugs upon the many parts of the body. Yet some enquirers will abide in this folly. I do not wonder at it, when I remember how foolish man is by nature.

Men who have left the whole spiritual realms untrod are very apt, when they see it open up suddenly before their eyes, to aspire in their hearts' pride to stand upon its loftiest peaks, to climb its Himalayas, to swim its Bosphorus, to fathom its Atlantic, and from this cause they forget its green pastures and still waters. I would have every convicted sinner here listen to my words this morning. Friend, you have to do with the plain Truth of the Gospel--namely, this, "Jesus Christ

came into the world to save sinners"--sinners such as you are, and faith links you to that Savior.

When you have learned that lesson, then you shall discover that God has chosen you from the beginning, that He has ordained you unto eternal life. But as yet you can not solve that matter. Leave that glorious doctrine till first your soul is saved by faith in Jesus Christ. It is plain, however, that this appetite for strong meat takes off the babe from the unadulterated milk of the Word. These questions help to confuse, trouble, worry, and distract the seeker for Jesus.

At this hour, too, to make confusion more confounded, Satan is quite sure to assail the soul with his diabolical insinuations and suggestions, with strong temptations and despairing thoughts. No king will willingly lose his subjects, and Satan, when he sees his captives about to turn runaways, sets extra guards around them. He will set others on to tempt them, or he will come himself personally and inject into the soul the most horrible thoughts, the most blasphemous suggestions, and the most despairing forebodings that can be conceived of.

Having felt this, I speak tenderly to such as may now be exercised with them. Marvel not at them, neither be dismayed. If you can, by the Holy Spirit's help, resist Satan--he will flee from you. If you can assail him with, "it is written," he will leave you. But be not astonished if now, for awhile, the fiery darts fly thick as hail. He has his military from

which he can vomit ten thousand shots at once upon a poor lost soul, and make it feel as though it were broken in pieces all asunder with horror and dismay.

You will triumph over him yet if you believe--the Lord will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Be of good courage! Though you fall, you

shall rise again! Faith will lift you up in the power of Jesus. I marvel not that when that dog of Hell howls in your ears, your spirit is sorely put to it for comfort. It may be, also, that when the soul is seeking for Jesus, it is at the same time much grieved to find it cannot even now cease from sin. "My old sins," says the heart, "I would be rid of them, but how can I hope for forgiveness, for I have sinned this very day? I went to my chamber, and I bowed my knee, and said, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner!'

"And I came down stairs resolved to be watchful, but something vexed me, and I spoke unadvisedly. How can I think God will have mercy on me?" Or says another, "I was seeking the Savior this morning. But I went out to my business, and I met with worldly company, and I forgot my Lord--I am afraid I mingled with them so closely as to participate in their sinful mirth, and now how can the Lord have any pity upon such a hypocritical seeker as I have been?" As if that poor heart expected to be perfect before it had even found pardon! As if a patient expected to be perfectly well before he had followed the advice of his physician!

My dear Hearer, if you were able to cease from all sin for a single day, I am sure you would be out of place on earth, for Heaven is the place for perfect people, and not this sinful earth. If a fountain sent forth nothing but pure water for one whole day, we might conclude that it was completely purified. The bearing of good fruit for one season would prove the tree to be good. If your heart abstained from sin of itself throughout one day, it might for another, and so on forever, and where would be the need of a Savior?

What? Do you not know that Christ came to save you from your new sins as well as from your old transgressions? Is His arm too short to reach your daily needs? His blood of too little power to wash away your fresh

pollutions? Have you still some hope of bettering yourself? Have done with this trifling! Confess yourself a helpless sinner, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, depraved in heart, and, therefore, needing the never-ceasing mercy of the Lord your God. Come, wash now in the fountain filled with blood, and if sin returns, ask Jesus to wash your feet again.

Make Jesus your sole reliance. Cry to Him, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean! Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Nothing else can end your perplexities. You cannot untie the Gordian knot of your difficulties! Cut it, then, by leaving all to Jesus. You cannot overcome your sins except by the blood of the Lamb. You cannot be what you should be, nor what you would be, except by taking Jesus to be your All in All. Here is a song for you--

"At last I own it cannot be That I should fit myself for You. Here, then, to You I all resign; Yours is the work, and only Yours. What shall I say Your Grace to move? I give up every plea beside, Lord I am sin, but You are love-- Lord, I am lost--but You have died!"

III. And now, in the third place, let me warn you of THE DANGERS OF THE STATE of "seeking for Jesus." I have already told you that there is much of hopefulness, but there is much of peril in your condition. Dear Seeker, what a sad thing it is that you should be wasting so much time, and losing so much comfort, by this long-continued seeking, when it might all end so happily even now at this present hour. Had you believed in Jesus at the very first, you had had light at once.

How often would He have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not! If you will trust Him now, the day star shall shine in your heart. You are like Hopeful and Christian in Giant Despair's Castle. They lamented and bemoaned their common sorrow and planned many unavailable methods of escape. But at last Christian,

as one half amazed, broke out into this passionate speech--"What a fool," said he, "am I to lie in this stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Then said Hopeful, "That's good news, good Brother, pluck it out of your bosom, and try."

My awakened Hearer, this is your condition. You have in your bosom, and you have in God's Word that which will unlock every door in your prison. Up, Man, and try it now! Can you not believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that God has sent Jesus to bear your sin? Can you not trust in Him? If you can, you are free--your sins are forgiven you--you are saved!

You have, perhaps, heard the incident of a dove, pursued by a hawk, which flew into the bosom of a man who was walking in the fields. And you remember that it was safely protected by him whom it had trusted. The dove would not of itself have flown there, but under the terror of the hawk it sought a shelter. You have been afraid of Jesus, you have thought He would not receive you. But now that Hell pursues you, be venturesome, and fly to Him! Say as our hymn puts it--

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

If Christ stood with a drawn sword in His hand, you had better run on the point of His sword than perish without Him. O come to Him, driven by desperation itself, if by nothing else--come into His bosom! You shall have peace at once. But all the while you remain seeking, I know not in what distracted manner you are wasting time, you are missing comfort, you are losing opportunities of happiness. Cease your seeking, for there is the Man whom you seek. He stands revealed before you. Reach here your finger and put it into the print of the nails. Or if

that is too bold, touch but the hem of His garment, and you shall be made whole!

Another evil is not only the losing present peace and comfort, but the danger of being driven to despair. I do not doubt that some persons who were once sincere but unrenewed seekers, have now given up all thought of seeking Christ, because they continued to seek when He was near them, to look for Him instead of looking to Him. And they have waited so long in prayer and Bible reading, and so on, that now they utterly despair, and give all up as hopeless.

It is no wonder. If you will try to do a thing in a wrong way, you cannot hope to succeed. If a man will not plow and sow, neither shall he reap. If you will not believe, neither shall you be established. A person may be very industrious, indeed, in what he does, but if he follows a method which never can produce the result he desires, he must not be surprised when he is disappointed. You are a seeker, and I am glad you are. But if you will not put your trust in Jesus, and lay your burden down at the Cross where He offered the great Sacrifice, it is no marvel if you continue to seek in vain.

It will be a great sorrow, but it will not be a great wonder, if you become at last despairing, and are shut up in the iron cage. O Man, O Woman, break away from this! May God's Holy Spirit come to your rescue now! Give up your own ideas of how to get peace--take God's method of salvation--and lay hold on eternal life by trusting in the slain Savior.

Another danger is that in some cases seeking at length dies out in indifference. Having sought after a fashion by prayer, and failing to find peace at once, temptations to go back to the world's pleasure attack the soul, and too often it becomes, from now on, impervious to exhortations and expostulations. The unbroken, unrenewed heart grows

sullen, and declares, "I tried, but I did not succeed. I may as well have what pleasure I can have, for spiritual joys are denied me. If the world to come cannot be mine, I will have this world and take my fill of it."

I pray you may never be driven to that, but my fear is that if you tarry long in this border land, seeking but yet halting between two opinions, undecided and unbelieving--at last you will relapse into your former state of spiritual slum-ber--and your last end will be worse than the first.

Another danger is lest you should take up with something short of Jesus Christ. I have known persons who have been content to remain seekers all their days. They have felt comforted by the thought that they are seekers. Now, such comfort is daubing with untempered mortar. A man out of employment has been walking up and down the London streets to find something to do. His family is in need, and he must find a situation. He is quite right to seek, but he will not be satisfied with seeking, he wants to find.

Tramping the street will not feed his children. He is not contented with having called at many shops. He will not rest till he finds what he is after--and he would be very foolish if he did. So to be a seeker after Christ, walking up and down the streets, as it were, will not fill your hungry soul. You must get Christ Himself. If any unemployed father of a family were to say, "Well, I walk about so many days in the week, and so many hours in the day, and I am quite satisfied, though I do not find anything to do," you would think him a great simpleton. And so with you.

It is a good sign when there is an appetite. But a mere appetite does not satisfy a man--he must eat the food provided. Your seeking Christ will not save you, except it leads you in very deed to believe in

Jesus. It is an ill sign when a man says, "Well, I am doing my best. I am always at a place of worship, I am a Bible reader, I practice prayer at home, I do my best." My dear Friend, if you settle down in that idea, you are self-righteous, and are off the road altogether. Besides, you are lying to your own heart, for after all you are at enmity with God, and the sign of that enmity is this--that you refuse to believe on His dear Son.

If you were reconciled to God you would love Jesus Christ, and trust in Him. I see what it is--you have resolved, after all, to be your own savior. You still think that there is something in outward religion to produce salvation. I solemnly assure you that if you stand out against believing in Christ, if you will not fly to those dear wounds of His, if you will not hide beneath the shelter of the Atonement, you will go to Hell as well from a place of worship as from the haunts of sin, and will perish as certainly with a Bible read as with a Bible burned--

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus, Can do helpless sinners good.

"Oh, but," you say, "I feel my sins so much!" Yes, but if you trust in your feelings you will perish in them as much as though you wallowed in your sins. O Soul, resolve with Toplady --

"He that suffered in my place, Shall my Physician be I will not be comforted Till Jesus comforts me."

Never hope to be saved except by God's way of salvation. O that the Holy Spirit would enable you in your heart to say, "Now I come to You, O Jesus! Guilty as I am, I lift my eye to You, and this is my prayer--'Help me for Your mercy's sake. Have pity upon me and cleanse me in Your blood, for I put all my trust in You.' " Resolve, O Seeker, to have no refuge of lies--no Savior but the Lamb of God.

I will confess to you, dear Seeker, that often and often I am myself personally driven to do what I trust you may be led to do today. I look

back upon my past life, and while I have much to thank God for, much in which to see His Spirit's hand, yet when I feel my responsibilities and my shortcomings, my heart sinks within me. When I think of my transgressions, better known to myself than to anyone else, and remember, too, that they are not known even to me as they are to God, I feel all hope swept away and my soul left in utter despair.

But by His Grace I come anew to the Cross and think of Who it was that died there, and why He died, and what designs of infinite mercy are answered by His death. It is so sweet to look up to the Crucified One again, and say, "I have nothing but You, my Lord, no confidence but You. If You are not accepted as my Substitute I must perish. If God's appointed Savior is not enough I have no other, but I know You are the Father's Well-Beloved, and I am accepted in You. You are all I want, and all I have."

How I desire, with intense longing, that you may do the same. It would be a blessed day for you, and for me a joyful occasion. The Jews in the present chapter asked our Savior, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" and He said, "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent." The greatest of all works, the most Godlike work, is to leave off self-righteous seeking, and trust in Jesus.

IV. Now I will conclude by delivering one or two DIRECTIONS TO THOSE WHO ARE "SEEKING FOR JESUS." Very brief shall these be. The first direction is--give attention, dear Friend, to the Object of faith. The only way by which you can be saved is by faith. Take that to be settled. Now if a man says, "I cannot believe such a thing"--what then? What is his wisest course?

Suppose you find a difficulty in believing a report--what do you do? Why, you consider the probabilities of it. Suppose it had been rumored

that the Emperor Napoleon had shot himself. Shall I believe the report? I will ask from where the rumor comes, what intelligence corroborates it, upon what authority it is stated--and soon, by that means--I arrive at a conclusion whether it is probably true, or is a mere idle tale.

Now if you earnestly desire to believe, faith is the gift of God, and a work of the Spirit, but God works according to the laws of mind, and faith in Christ will most readily come to you in conformity with those laws. "Faith comes by hearing," why by hearing? Why, because by hearing I learn the Truth concerning Christ, and what I hear commends itself to my judgment and understanding, and so I come to believe.

Faith comes to us by reading, which is another form of hearing. Read what the Scripture has to say about the Messiah and His work and you will be helped to believe God's Testimony, by knowing what it is and on what authority it comes to you. Let your hearing and your reading be accompanied with meditation--like the Virgin Mary--ponder these things in your heart. "Incline your ear," says the Spirit, "and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live."

Now, that inclining of the ear means a devout and diligent attention to the Good News, and a weighing of it in your inmost heart. Now look at it--you have sinned--and God must punish sin. These two facts are clear enough to your conscience. Is it not a marvelous system that God should be pleased to put away sin through an Atonement, by laying the sin upon Another, and punishing it in the Person of His Son?

Do you know of any other system that would meet the case so well, that would be so suitable to you? I believe that the authenticity of Scripture is better proved by the very existence of this doctrine than by anything else--for no human mind could ever have contrived or conceived of a way so just to God--and yet so infinitely gracious. I feel sure it is true, I am certain of it.

Then I find it promised over and over again by God Himself, that if I trust Christ I shall have the benefit of all His work. I therefore believe the thing is reasonable, it is proclaimed by Divine authority. I have God's promise for it, I know that the Almighty One cannot lie. I cheerfully accept what He provides for me, and I am saved. My dear Hearer, if you find it hard to believe, shut yourself up this afternoon in your room, and come not out again till you have pictured to your mind's eye the everlasting God unveiling Himself of His ineffable splendors, and taking upon Himself the nature of Man.

Behold that glorious One nailed to Calvary's tree, forsaken of God, crying out in anguish, and dying without a friend--and all to make an Atonement to the Law of God! As you are fixing your eyes upon this, and bowing in humble prayer, faith will come to you. The Holy Spirit will overshadow you and beget it in your soul--faith will drop in your soul like the dew from Heaven! You will wonder to find the hardness of your heart all gone, and your unbelief all departed, and you will say, "Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief."

Another direction, however, is--take care, my dear Friend, to clear away as far as possible everything that would hinder your believing. Now you may depend upon it that going into sin hinders believing. You cannot continue in willful sin and yet become a Believer. Sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance. A man cannot be tied to a post and yet run away at the same time. If you bind yourself to your sin, you cannot escape.

Withdraw at once from evil company--it is a very deadly mischief to young seekers. You hear an impressive sermon, but then you go away talking with idle gossips and you fall into frivolous chit-chat on the Sunday afternoon. You cannot expect your soul to grow in the right direction under such influences. Get on your knees, get alone, get to

your God, get to Jesus Christ. This it is that will roll away the stone which blocks the door.

And, once again, do remember that till you have believed, your danger is of the most imminent kind. You are not in danger of something future only--you are in peril even now, for the wrath of God abides on you. You are not like a city which is to be attacked by troops yet at a distance--the Judge is even at the door. You are actually besieged. The foes have encompassed you round about. They lift the scaling ladders, they will soon scale the walls.

Beware, O Sinner, beware! Your present state is terrible! Your future state will be hopeless. Today is the accepted time. Now or never it is with some of you--now escape for your lives--now seek, but seek in the right way, by BELIEVING in Him who is the Savior of the sons of men.

How I have longed, this morning, for a tongue like the pen of a ready writer! How I have opened my mouth and panted to speak these things in passionate earnest, for I hunger for your salvation! Speak from my soul I do, but I cannot preach as I would, else would I saturate this sermon with my tears. O that the Master might bless even my weakness of speech to carry home the Truth of God to your hearts and consciences! I do not like to let one of you go unless you have thought over these things, and have given your hearts to Jesus.

I shall probably never address many of you again, certainly not all of you. You have come across the sea and you are going to the ends of the earth, some of you. I speak in God's name. O now, before you have gone from under the sound of the Word, now let the believing look be given--"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." It is the cry of the crucified Savior! Turn not away from that dear voice so full of anguish! Hide not your eyes from that brow still marked with the crown of thorns!

Despise not those nailed hands and feet, but yield to Him as again He cries in agony of love, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." O Lord, turn them! And they shall be turned. Amen.

Chapter 40

A String Of Pearls

(No. 948)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:3-5.

THE persons whom Peter addressed were in great need of comfort. They were strangers, strangers scattered far from home. They had in consequence to suffer manifold trials and therefore needed plenteous consolations. Such is our position in a spiritual sense. We, too, are strangers and foreigners. We are pilgrims and sojourners below, and our citizenship is in Heaven. We also require the Word of comfort, for while our banishment lasts, we look for tribulations. The persons whom Peter addressed were God's chosen, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," and one sure result of Divine election is the world's enmity. "If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

So you too, my Brethren, chosen out from among men, to be the peculiar people of God, must expect to be partakers of the Cross--for the servant is not greater than his Lord. Since they persecuted Him they

will also persecute you. Therefore to you, as to those of old by Peter, the Word of consolation is sent this day. The Apostle also addressed the sanctified. Through the Holy Spirit they had been sanctified and set apart. To the "obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus" they had been brought. They were a people who had "purified their souls in obeying the Truth of God through the Spirit."

And rest assured no man can do this without encountering fiery trials. He who swims with the stream shall find all things go easily with him until he reaches the waterfall of destruction. But he who stems the torrent must expect to breast many a raging billow. And therefore to such the strong consolations of the Gospel are necessary. Speak we then this morning to the same characters as those addressed by Peter, even to you who "are not of the world," but "strangers." To you who are "chosen of God," and therefore the object of the enmity of man. To you who maintain the separated life of true holiness, and are therefore opposed by the profane.

You have need of comfort, and in the Word, and by the Holy Spirit, your need is more than met. Our Apostle cheers these troubled hearts by exciting them to a song of praise. I might almost entitle these three verses a New Testament Psalm. They are stanzas of a majestic song. You have here a delightful hymn. It scarcely needs to be turned into verse--it is in itself essential poetry.

Now, my Brethren, to lead the mind to praise God is one of the surest ways of uplifting it from depression. The wild beasts of anxiety and discontent which surround our bivouac in the wilderness will be driven away by the fire of our gratitude and the song of our praise. When the Psalm recounts with joyous gratitude the mercies which God has given us, it supplants distress by thankfulness, even as the fir tree and the myrtle take the place of the thorn and the brier where the Gospel works

its wonders.

In these three verses we have a string of pearls, a necklace of diamonds, a cabinet of jewels--no, the comparisons are poor--we have something far better than all the riches of the earth can ever typify. You have here the heritage of the chosen of God. Your heritage, Beloved, your own peculiar portion if you belong to Christ this day. We shall conduct you through this mine of treasure, and ask you to dwell upon each blessing, that your souls may be comforted, and that you, lifting up your hearts in blessing, and praising the God of all Grace, may forget your cares and sorrows, and find a young Heaven begun below--a Paradise blooming amid the desert. There are seven choice things in the text, a perfect number of perfect things. One might see more than seven, but these will exhaust all our time. Therefore we shall speak briefly upon each one.

First, I see in the text as the source of all the rest, ABUNDANT MERCY. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope." No other attribute could have helped us had Mercy refused. As we are by nature Justice condemns us, Holiness frowns upon us, Power crushes us, Truth confirms the threat of the Law, and Wrath fulfils it. It is from the mercy of our God that all our hopes begin.

Mercy is needed for the miserable, and yet more for the sinful. Misery and sin are fully united in the human race, and Mercy, here, performs her noble deeds. My Brethren, God has vouchsafed His mercy to us, and we must thankfully acknowledge that in our case His mercy has been abundant mercy.

We were defiled with abundant sin, and only the multitude of His loving kindnesses could have put those sins away. We were infected with an abundance of evil, and only overflowing mercy can ever cure us of all

our natural disease, and make us meet for Heaven. We have received abundant Grace up till now. We have made great drafts upon the Exchequer of God, and of His fullness have all we received Grace for Grace. Where sin has abounded, Grace has much more abounded. Will you, my fellow Debtor, stand still awhile and contemplate the abundant mercy of our blessed God?

A river deep and broad is before you. Track it to its fountain head--see it welling up in the Covenant of Grace--in the eternal purposes of Infinite Wisdom. The secret source is no small spring, no mere bubbling fountain, it is a very geyser, leaping aloft in fullness of power. The springs of the sea are not comparable with it. Not even an angel could fathom the springs of eternal love or measure the depths of Infinite Grace.

Follow now the stream--mark it in all its course. See how it widens and deepens, how at the foot of the Cross it expands into a measureless river! Mark how the filthy come and wash. See how each polluted one comes up milk-white from the washing! Note how the dead are brought to be bathed in this sacred stream, and mark how they live the moment that they touch its wave. Mark how the sick are laid upon the bank, and if but the spray of the river falls upon them they are made whole!

See how on either bank rich verdure clothes the land! Wherever this stream comes, all is life and happiness. Observe along the margin the many trees whose leaves never wither, and whose fruits in season are always brought to maturity. These all draw their life from this flood, and drink from this river of God, which is full of water. Fail not with gladsome eye to note the thousand boats of fairest sail which scud along the mighty river with colors flying, each vessel laden with joy. Behold how happily they are borne along by the current of mercy to the ocean of infinite felicity!

Now we reach the mighty main of mercy, dare you attempt with wings of faith to fly over that glassy sea? No shore gives boundary to that great deep, no voice proclaims its length and breadth. But from its lowest deeps and all along its unruffled bosom I hear a voice which says, "Here is Love." "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out," but this we know, that His love towards His elect surpasses all conception, even--

"Imagination's utmost stretch In wonder dies away."

Turn to the words of the text a moment, for there is great suggestiveness in them. It is God's great mercy that is spoken of here. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy." Everything in God is on a grand scale. Great power--He shakes the world. Great wisdom--He balances the clouds. His mercy is commensurate with His other attributes, it is Godlike mercy! Infinite mercy! You must measure His Godhead before you shall compute His mercy. My Soul, think for awhile--you have drank out of this exceeding great and wide sea, and it is all yours to drink from forever!

Well may it be called "abundant," if it is infinite. It will always be abundant, for all that can be drawn from it will be but as the drop of a bucket to the sea itself. The mercy which deals with us is not man's mercy, but God's mercy, and therefore boundless mercy. But note again, it is the mercy of the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the mercy of God in Christ. God's mercy is always special, but His mercy in Christ is especially special.

I know not how else to describe it. His mercy in Nature is bright. His mercy in Providence is conspicuous. But His mercy in His dear Son, His mercy in the Incarnate God--His mercy through the perfect Sacrifice--this is mercy's best wine kept to the last. This is mercy's "fat things full of marrow." When I see Jesus descending from Heaven to

earth, Jesus bleeding, Jesus paying all the debts of His people, I can well understand that the mercy of God in Christ must be abundant mercy.

Note carefully another word, it is the mercy of "the Father." You have read this last week, I dare say, and felt sickened as you read, the fearful stories of the wounded and their sufferings on the battlefield. You have read also descriptions of how the wounded, when they are brought into the many German towns are met by their compatriots, who re-

joice in their victories, but at the same time lament for the valiant men who are maimed for life. You stand on the platform of the railway station, a stranger, and you see a fine young man with an arm shot away, looking sickly and pale from pain and hardships, and you pity him.

I know you pity him from your heart, but an elderly man rushes before you, it is his father. And as he looks upon his son, whom he sent to the war so manly, so strong, so full of health and vigor--now reduced to the mere ghost of what he was--he pities as a stranger cannot. His inmost heart is moved with compassion for his son. The mercy of the Lord to us is not the mercy of a stranger to a stranger, but the mercy of a Father towards his own dear children. Such mercy has the Lord had on me, and I weep for joy as I tell of it.

"Like as a father pities his children," so has He pitied me. I know if He had not loved me He could not have treated me so tenderly. Such pity, such mercy has He had on you. And He is still the same. Do you not rejoice to think that you participate in abundant mercy, Divine mercy, the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, a Father's mercy, the mercy of our God and Father? O reach to the height of the text--one more step will do it.

The Father who is thus tender to us, is also the "Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ." And therefore such a Father as can be found nowhere else. The Father of Him who is the Perfect and the Ever-Blessed, is also your Father. And all His mercy belongs to you. Let us congratulate each other, my Brothers and Sisters in the faith. Let us shake off all thoughts of our poverty and all trembling because of our trials. We are rich and abound, for Heaven's "abundant mercy" belongs to us. "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

II. The next great blessing in the text is that OF INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE. Mark that, O Believer. "The God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope." One of the first displays of Divine mercy which we experience is being begotten again. Our first birth gave us the image of the first Adam--"earthly." Our second birth, and that alone, gives us the image of the second Adam, which is "heavenly."

To be begotten once may be a curse--to be begotten again is everlastingly and assuredly a blessing. To be born once may be a subject for eternal bewailing--to be born a second time will be the theme of a joyful and unending song. My Brethren, saints are "begotten again unto a lively hope" in the hour of their regeneration, when they are "born again from above."

Have we been so born? If we have, we enjoy a blessing far exceeding anything which the natural man can dream of. The Holy Spirit comes upon the chosen in the hour appointed and creates in them a new heart and a right spirit. In a supernatural manner a new principle is implanted, a new life is created within the soul. Just as assuredly as our first birth gives us being from our former nothingness, our new life brings us from utter death into the world of spirit, and into newness of life.

We are new born by the "incorruptible seed which lives and abides

forever." Ours is not the fancied regeneration of those who impute to a mere ceremony, invented by men, a change which is altogether of God's own working. It is not an imaginary charm worked by incantations and sprinkling over an unconscious baby. It is a real creation, a true life--not fictitious--but actual and operative, and one which is found to reveal itself in righteousness and true holiness.

You shall know this new life by the faith and the repentance which always come with it wherever God Himself is pleased to work it. The new life of a Christian is Divine in its origin--God has begotten us. The new life comes not from man--it is worked by the operation of the Holy Spirit. As certainly as God spoke, and it was done, in the creation of the world, so He speaks in the heart of man, and it is done--and the new creature is born. The new life in us, as it has a Divine origin, has also a Divine Nature. You are made partakers of the Divine Nature. The life of a Christian is the life of God--God dwells in him. The Holy Spirit Himself enters the Believer and abides in him, and makes him a living man. Therefore, from its Divine Nature, the inner life of the Believer can by no possibility ever be destroyed. You must first destroy the Godhead before you can quench the spark of the eternal flame that burns within the Believer's bosom. Has not the Apostle told us it is a "living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever"?

What a great mystery is this, but at the same time what a blessing! To be born again, to be born from above, to be born by the power of God into a discernment of spiritual truths. To hear spiritual voices, to see spiritual sights, and to be worshippers in spirit and in truth of God, who is a Spirit. God grant that if we have never known this we yet may be created anew in Christ Jesus.

Observe, dear Brethren, to be begotten again is a very marvelous thing.

Suppose a man is born into this world, as is too frequently the case, with a predisposition to some sad hereditary disease. There he is, filled with disease, and medicine cannot eject the unwelcome tenant from his body. Suppose that man's body could be altogether new born, and he could

receive a new body pure from all sickness--it would be a great mercy. But, O my Brothers and Sisters, it does not approach to regeneration! Because our supposition only deals with the body, while the new birth renews the soul, and even implants a higher nature. Regeneration overcomes not a mere material disease, not an infliction in the flesh, but the natural depravity of the heart--the deadly disorder of the soul. We are born again, and by that means we are delivered from the power of corruption. The new nature having no depravity in it, nor tendency to sin, "it cannot sin because it is born of God."

The moment the heavenly life is implanted it begins to war with the old nature, and continues to struggle violently with it--there is a deadly enmity between the two. The new nature will never be reconciled to the old, or the old one to the new, but the new will conquer and overcome the evil. You have smiled at the pleasant fiction of old men being ground young again in a mill--but that marvel would be nothing compared with this--the old man made young would still be the same man. And placed in the same circumstances, he would develop into the same character.

But here is the old man crucified and a new man created in the Divine image! Who can estimate the privilege of receiving a Heaven-born Nature, which, however weak and feeble it may be at the first, is ever-living, and by the power of God will gain the ultimate victory?

Let us then rejoice and be glad! We may be very poor today, but we are born from above. We may be much afflicted, but what of that if we are

the twice-born sons of Heaven? We may be despised and rejected, but the heavenly light has shone upon our eyes. We have been regenerated, we have "passed from death unto life." Here is ceaseless cause for gratitude and joy, and if we rightly consider it, we may forget our griefs.

III. A third blessing strictly connected with this new life, is A LIVELY HOPE. "He has begotten us again unto a lively hope." Could a man live without hope? Men manage to survive the worst condition of distress when they are encouraged by a hope. But is not suicide the natural result of the death of hope? Yes, we must have a hope, and the Christian is not left without one. He has "a lively hope," that is to say, first, he has a hope within him, real, true, and operative.

Some men's hopes of Heaven are not living hopes, for they never stir them to action. They live as if they were going to Hell, and yet they coolly talk about hoping that all will be well with them at last! A Christian's hope purifies him, excites him to diligence, makes him seek after that which he expects to obtain. A student at the University hoping to gain a prize uses his best endeavors, burns the midnight oil, strains all his faculties that he may reach the mark which will ensure his passing the exams.

Even thus the Christian with a lively hope devotes himself to obtaining the blessings which God has promised in His Word. The Lord has begotten us to a "lively hope," that is to say, to a vigorous, active, operating hope. It is a "lively hope" in another sense, namely, that it cheers and enlivens. The swimmer who is ready to sink, if he sees a boat nearing him, plucks up courage and swims with all his strength because now he expects that his swimming will be of effectual service to him. The Christian amid the waves and billows of adversity retains his hope, a glorious hope of future bliss, and therefore he strikes out like a

man towards the heavenly shore. Our hope buoys up the soul, keeps the head above water, inspires confidence and sustains courage!

It is also called a "living hope," because it is imperishable. Other hopes fade like withering flowers. The hopes of the rich, the boasts of the proud--all these will die out as a candle when it flickers in the socket. The hope of the greatest monarch has been crushed before our eyes. He set up the standard of victory too soon, and has seen it trailed in the mire. There is no unwaning hope beneath the changeful moon--the only imperishable hope is that which climbs above the stars, and fixes itself upon the Throne of God and the Person of Jesus Christ.

The hope which God has given to His truly quickened people is a lively hope, however, because it deals with life. Brethren, it may be Christ will come while yet we live, and then we shall not die but shall be fitted for Heaven by a change. However, it is probable that we may have to depart out of this world unto the Father by the usual course of nature. And in expecting to do so let us not look at death as a gloomy matter, as though it could at all jeopardize our welfare or ultimately injure us.

No, my Brethren, we have a living hope, a lively hope. Charles Borromeo, the famous bishop of Milan, ordered a painter who was about to draw a skeleton with a scythe over a sepulcher, to substitute for it the golden key of Paradise. Truly this is a most fitting emblem for a Believer's tomb--for what is death but the key of Heaven to the Christian? We notice frequently over cemetery gates, as an emblematic device, a torch turned over ready to be quenched. Ah, my Brethren, it is not so, the torch of our life burns the better, and blazes the brighter for the change of death.

The breaking of the pitcher which now surrounds the lamp and conceals the glory, will permit our inner life to reveal its lofty nature, and

before long even the pitcher shall be so remodeled as to become an aid to that light! Its present

breaking is but preparatory to its future refashioning. It is a blessed thought that the part of us which must most sadly feel the mortal stroke is secured beyond all fear from permanent destruction. We know that this very body, though it molders into dust, shall live again!

These weeping eyes shall have all tears wiped from them. These hands which grasp today the sword of a conflict shall wave the palm branch of triumph. My Brethren, it were not just that one body should fight and another body should be crowned--that one body should labor and another body have the reward. The same identical body shall rise from the dead at the Lord's coming, marvelously changed, strangely developed as the seed develops into the full-blown flower-- but still the same--in very deed the same!

This very body shall be resplendent with glory, even the same which now bears sickness and pain. This is our lively hope--that death has no dominion over any part of our manhood. There is for awhile a separation between the soul and the body--it is but for awhile. There is for the flesh a temporary slumbering in the tomb, it is but a slumber, and the waking shall be in the likeness of Christ. As for the soul, it shall be forever with the Lord, waiting for the latter day and the coming of Christ, when the body itself shall be raised from corruption into the likeness of the Glory of Him who is the first begotten from the dead.

Thus, I have brought you up from the abundant mercy to the new life, and onward, to the lively hope.

IV. We cannot tarry, but must notice, in the fourth place, another delightful possession which ought effectually to chase away from all of us the glooms of this life, and that is A RISEN SAVIOR. "He has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus

Christ from the dead." Our best Friend is not dead! Our great Patron and Helper, our Omnipotent Savior, is not lying in the tomb today. He lives, He ever lives! No sound of greater gladness can be heard in the Christian Church than this--"The Lord is risen, the Lord is risen indeed!"

Now, Brethren, observe the connection between a risen Savior and our living hope. Jesus Christ died, not in appearance, but in reality. In proof whereof, His heart was pierced by the soldier's spear. He was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, truly a corpse. Not a spark of life remained. The only difference between His dead body and the dead body of any other was that still the preserving power hovered over Him, and as His body had been defiled by no sin, so His flesh could not see corruption as it would have done had it been the body of a sinful man. Then, at the end of the appointed time, the same Savior who was laid in the tomb rose from the dead--not in se-crecy--but before the Roman guards who watched the sepulcher. They fled in terror. He met His disciples sometimes one by one, sometimes two at a time. On other occasions, four hundred at once saw Him--credible witnesses--persons who had no reason for forging a falsehood. Persons who so believed that they saw Him that many of them died, for their belief, the most painful deaths.

He rose, not in fantasy and figure, but in reality. One of the witnesses put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side. And in the presence of His assembled disciples, the Risen One ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb. He really and literally rose from the dead --the selfsame Christ who was born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate--and afterwards ascended into Heaven. That fact is as well proved as any fact in human history. There never, perhaps, was any incident of human history more

fully verified than the rising of Jesus of Nazareth from the tomb.

Now, note you well the comfort which arises out of this fact, since it proves that we possess a living Advocate, Mediator and High Priest who has passed into the heavens. Moreover, since all Believers, being partakers of the incorruptible life of God are one with Jesus Christ, that which happens to Him virtually happens to them. They died in His death, they live in His life, they reign in His Glory. As in Adam all die who were in Adam, so in Christ shall all be made alive who are in Christ--the two Adams head up their dispensations--whatever happens to either of the Adams, happens to those represented by him.

So, then, the resurrection of Jesus is virtually my resurrection. Were He dead still, then might I fear, no, I would know, that I, dying, should die. But He, having died, arose again in due season and lives! Therefore I, dying, shall also rise and live, for as Jesus is, so must I be. If I have within me the new life, I have the same life in me that is in Christ, and the same thing happens to me as happens to Christ. If His life dies, mine, being the same, dies also. But, as He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also," my life is secure.

Here, then, is the top and bottom of the Christian's hope--"We are begotten again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." As we see Him alive, we rejoice that He lives, because He lives for us, and we live in

Him.

Let me give you an illustration. When Joseph was in Egypt, he was highly exalted and placed upon the throne. Now, while his brothers did not know him they were grievously afraid to go down into Egypt--they thought him to be an Egyptian, a haughty ruler of the land--and that he treated them roughly. But when once they and their father were persuaded that Joseph, their brother, was alive and on the throne, then

they cheerfully joined with the old man when he said, "Joseph my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Now, into the unknown land our Elder Brother has gone--where is He and what? Why, He is King of the country. He sits on a Throne. O Brethren, with what comfort do we now go down into that Egypt! With what consolation will we enter the unknown country, which some think to be shrouded in darkness, but which, now that Jesus reigns on its Throne, is full of light to us!

Or take another image. When the children of Israel went through the Jordan, they were told that the Jordan would divide before them, but they were still more fully assured when the priests went forward with the ark. For as soon as the feet of the priests touched the edge of the river, the waters began to divide. As they saw their priests march through the bed of the stream, and come up on the other side, all doubts about the security of the passage must have vanished at once! The priests were the representatives of the people before God, and where they passed safely all Israel might go.

See you, then, my Brethren, the "Great High Priest of our profession" has led the van. The ark of the Eternal Covenant has gone before, death is dried up, so that we can say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" And you and I may, with perfect confidence, full of a lively hope, march onwards into the Glory land, for Jesus Christ has safely passed the flood, and even so shall we.

Here, then, is reason for joy. We will not fear the present, we will not dread the future. For Christ is risen, indeed, and our lively hope is fixed on Him. Thus we have set before you four out of the seven precious things.

V. The fifth is exceedingly rich, but we can only give a word where many sermons would not exhaust--AN INCORRUPTIBLE INHERITANCE--"an

inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away." God has been pleased in His abundant mercy to prepare for His people an inheritance. He has made them sons, and if children, then heirs. He has given them a new life, and if a new life, then there must be possessions and a place suitable for that new life.

A heavenly nature requires a heavenly inheritance, Heaven-born children must have a heavenly portion. Now I shall only ask you to notice that the inheritance which God has prepared for us has a fourfold description appended to it. First, as to its substance--it is "incorruptible." The substance of everything earthly by degrees passes away. Even solid granite will rot and crumble. The substance of things seen, I may say in paradox, is devoid of substance.

Empires have grown great, but the inward corruption within their constitution has at length dissolved them. Dynasties have been wrecked, and thrones have tottered by internal corruption, but the inheritance of the saints of God has nothing within it that can make it perish. Forever and forever shall the blissful portion of the sanctified be theirs. Heaven, and the streets thereof, are all said to be of precious stones and pure gold, because they are imperishable.

Next, for purity--it is "undefiled." Earthly inheritances are often defiled in the getting. Some men have grown rich by fraud, by violence, by oppression of the poor. How many a heritage is polluted all over with the slime of the serpent! And he that inherits the goods of such a one inherits therewith a curse, for God will surely avenge injustice and wrong doing, even to the third generation.

But our inheritance is undefiled, for it was won by the obedience, the perfection, and sufferings of Jesus. No thought of wrong was used in the getting of the portion of the Well-Beloved of God. An inheritance may be defiled after it is possessed, but Heaven never shall be. Satan

shall never enter there, nor sin of any kind pass through the gate of pearl. O Brethren, what a joy is this! Defilement is on everything in this fallen world. We cannot purge ourselves completely-- earthly things all bring a measure of defilement with them. But up yonder our portion shall not be stained with sin, we shall be perfect, and all around us perfect, too.

And then it is added for its beauty, "it fades not away." The substance of a thing might endure after its beauty was gone, but in Heaven there shall be no declining in the beauty of anything celestial. Milton sings of the amaranth, which he describes as blossoming at the foot of the tree of life in the garden of Eden. It was a flower of perpetual sweetness, whose beauty never faded. But he says --

"Soon for man's offense

To Heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows And flowers aloft, shading the fountain of life, And where the river of bliss through midst of Hea ven Rolls over Elysian flowers her amber stream;

With these, that never fade, the spirits elect Bind their resplendent locks, wreathed with beams." The amaranthine inheritance is yours. The garden of Paradise shall never cease to bloom, and the wreath of victory shall never wither from your brows. Oh, what joy is this for you! Your inheritance is for substance incorruptible, for purity undefiled, for beauty unfading. And then for possession, it is secure--"reserved in Heaven for you." How I delight to dwell upon the thought that Heaven is not to be scrambled for, that the portion of each saint in Glory is given to him by lot even as was Canaan of old to Judah, to Reuben, to Manasseh, and the like.

There is a place in Heaven for me which none of you could fill. There is a harp which no fingers can strike but mine, and a crown which no brow can wear but this. And so with each of you--you shall have your

own, your own appointed inheritance. He has begotten each one of you again--you are as truly begotten as any other Believer. You have the same hope, and you shall as surely stand in your lot at the end of the days. O clap your hands, you righteous! Shout for joy! Scanty is your portion here and hard your lot, it may be, but the undefiled inheritance will more than make amends. Therefore, lift up your hearts this day, and let not your hands hang down.

VI. Time fails us, therefore we must mention the sixth blessing at once, it is INVIOLABLE SECURITY. The inheritance is kept for you, and you are kept for the inheritance. The word is a military one. It signifies a city garrisoned and defended. Think of a city besieged--Strasbourg, if you will--that is an emblem of your condition in this world. The enemy pour in their shot, they keep up the fire day and night, and set the city on a blaze, and even thus Satan bombards us with temptations, and beleaguers us with all the hosts of Hell.

Our great enemy has determined to raze the citadel of our faith even to the ground. His great guns are drawn up around our bastions. His sappers and miners are busy with our bulwarks. Even now it may be his shells are tearing our hearts, and his shot is setting our nature in a blaze.

Herein is our confidence--our great Captain has walled us around--He has appointed Salvation for walls and bulwarks. We are safe, though all the devils of Hell surround us, for we are garrisoned by Omnipotence. Each Believer is kept by that same power which "bears the earth's huge pillars up," and sustains the arches of Heaven. Jerusalem, you are besieged, but you may laugh your enemy to scorn, he shall never break through your ramparts--

"Munitions of stupendous rock Our dwelling place shall be, There shall our soul without a shock Our vanquished foemensee."

Our enemies shall assemble, but when they perceive that God is known in our palaces for a refuge, they shall be troubled and hasten away. Fear shall take hold upon them, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Every Believer is kept by the power of God, but the power of God does not produce in us sloth--but faith. We are commanded to watch, that is what we are to do. But we are told both to watch and pray, because our watching is not enough. We need God's watching, also, and we are to pray for it. Faith is the under captain of the city. God's power protects it--"the King is in the midst of her." But Faith is the high constable of the tower. He it is that goes on the walls, arms the warders, strengthens the bastions, and brings help out of the sanctuary. While the sword of the Lord and of Gideon is at work, the Midianites cannot prevail.

This keeping, observe, my Brothers and Sisters, for I must leave the point--this keeping is complete and continuous--it will never end until we shall need keeping no longer. We shall be kept "unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I believe this means that we shall not only be kept till our souls reach Heaven, but we shall be kept till the advent. You say, "Why is that necessary?" I reply, only half of our manhood goes to Heaven at death, the other part, namely, our body, waits below till the resurrection. Yet our dust is precious in God's sight, and therefore it is watched over until the day of Christ's appearing--for that is the appointed hour for the redemption of the body--

"Sweet Truth to me, I shall arise, And with these eyes, my Savior see."

Wherever my dust may be scattered, though to the four winds of Heaven it is divided, though it pass through every conceivable change and combination--yet each atom of my dust shall hear the sound of the archangel's trump--or if not each earthly particle of this my frame,

yet each essential constituent shall hear the voice of God. And bone to bone each bone shall come, and the body shall rise intact and perfect, for it is kept by the power of God unto the salvation ready to be revealed.

O my Brethren, what a glorious thing it is to know that the salvation God has given us in Christ is a perfect salvation of our complete manhood! There shall not a hair of your head perish. You shall go into the furnace, you shall walk amid the glowing coals of death, but you shall come forth with not a smell of fire passed upon you. At the Lord's appearing you shall be none the worse for the fall of Adam. You shall be none the worse for your own transgressions. You shall be none the worse for all the scars of battle. You shall be none the worse for dying--you shall be in Heaven as bright as God Himself could have made you if you had never fallen, and never sinned!

Do I exaggerate? No, verily, for it is written, "We shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." We shall wake up in His likeness. Oh, the glory of complete victory over Satan's arts, and Satan's strength! He shall be defeated all along the line! He shall gain nothing by all his attacks upon our God, and upon us--but we in the image of Jesus shall laugh at the complete defeat of evil, and glorify God and the Lamb forever!

VII. The best I have reserved for the last. Out of the seven treasures of the Christian the last comprehends all, is better than all, though what I have already spoken is everything--it is A BLESSED GOD. We left this to the last, though it comes first--"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is joy to have Heaven, it is joy to possess a new life to fit me for Heaven--but the greatest of all is to have my God, my own Savior's God, my Father, my own Savior's Father, to be all my own!

God Himself has said, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." He has not given you earth and Heaven only, though that were much. He has given you the Heaven of Heaven--Himself. Herod spoke of giving the "half of his kingdom." But the Lord has not given you the half of His kingdom, nor even the whole of His kingdom only--but His own Self the blessed God has in Covenant made over to you. Will not this make you rejoice? Methinks you may go forth with those that make merry and rejoice before God with a joy that knows no bound--"Sing unto God, sing praise," sing, unto God, sing praises! Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."

Brethren, the practical point is, show your gratitude and your joy by blessing God. You can bless Him with your voices. Sing more than you do. Singing is Heaven's work, practice it here. At your work, do if you can, quietly raise a hymn and bless the Lord. But oh, keep the fire on the altar of your hearts always burning! Praise Him, bless Him. His mercy endures forever, so let your praises endure.

Bless Him also with your substance. He is a blessed God. Do not give Him mere words--they are but air--and tongues but clay. Give Him the best you have. In the old superstitious times the Churches used to be adorned with the rarest pearls and jewels, with treasures of gold and silver--for men then gave mines of wealth to what they believed to be the service of God.

Shall the true faith have less operative power upon us? Shall the "lively hope" make us do less for God than the mere dead hope of the followers of Rome? No, let us be generous at all times, and count it our joy to sacrifice unto our God. Let us give Him our efforts, our time, our talents. Bless the Lord this afternoon, you Sunday school teachers. Teach those dear children under a sense of your own obligations to God. You who go from house to house this afternoon, you

who will preach in the streets and lift up your voices in the corners of the thoroughfares--preach as those who are begotten unto a lively hope by the abundant mercy of God.

Preacher, live more intensely and ardently than ever you have done.

Deacons, serve the Church more thoroughly than you have done as yet.

Elders, give your whole souls to the care of Christ's flock, which He has redeemed with His blood. Each one of you workers for Jesus Christ work not for Him after an ordinary sort, as men do for a master whose pay is no larger than he can be compelled to make it--but work with heart, and soul, and strength for Him who loved you to the death and poured out His soul to redeem you from going down into Hell.

Thus prove that the Divine Nature is truly in you, and that you possess the "lively hope" implanted by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Lord bless you all, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 41

The Unconquerable King

(No. 949)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up my eyes unto Heaven, and my understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What do You?" Daniel 4:34,35.

NO one has ever numbered Nebuchadnezzar with the Prophets, or believed his language to be inspired. We have before us simply a statement made by an uninspired man, after passing through the most extraordinary experience. He had been among the greatest and proudest of men--he suddenly fell into the condition of a grass-eating ox, by losing his reason. And upon being restored, he acknowledged publicly the hand of the Most High. I should not have taken his language as my text if it had not happened to be, as it is, a most correct and vigorous statement of sublime doctrines which are clearly stated by the Holy Spirit in different parts of Scripture.

It is a singular instance of how, when God comes to deal with men in afflicting Providences, He can make them clearly see many great Truths concerning Himself, and can constrain them to express their convictions in identically the same way as they would have done if His own Spirit

had dictated the terms. There are certain parts of the Divine Character which even the unspiritual man cannot avoid seeing. And after passing through certain processes of suffering and humiliation, the man is compelled to add his witness to the testimony of God's Spirit with regard to the Divine Character.

Every single word that Nebuchadnezzar here utters can be backed up and supported by undoubtedly inspired words of men sent of God to proclaim infallible Truth. We shall not, therefore, need to answer the objection that our text is simply the statement of Nebuchadnezzar--we grant that it is so--but we shall show as we proceed that Babylon's humbled monarch herein has spoken most correctly and accurately--and in full accordance with the testimony of other parts of Scripture.

Before I conduct your minds to a close consideration of the text, I must make one remark. Many of you will very naturally suppose that the chapter read during this service, the hymns and the sermon, were all intended to have reference to a certain great political event reported in the papers of last night [the surrender of Napoleon to the King of Prussia]. But please observe that your supposition will be unfounded, for my text was fixed upon yesterday morning, before any sort of news had reached me, and the service would have been the same if that event had not occurred. So that anything strikingly suggestive in the choice of the passage may be looked upon, if you will, as denoting the guidance of God's Spirit, but must not be imputed to any intentional reference on my part.

We will now come first to consider the doctrinal instruction of the text. Secondly, we would learn the practical teaching of it. And thirdly, we would exhibit the spirit suitable after the contemplation of such a subject.

I. First, then, let us turn to the text, and consider THE DOCTRINAL

INSTRUCTION here given to us. We have here plainly stated the doctrine of the eternal Self-Existence of God. "I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that lives forever." If this word needed to be confirmed we would refer you to the language of John in the Book of the Revelation where we find him describing, in the fourth chapter, at the ninth and tenth verses, the living creatures and the four and twenty elders as giving glory and honor and thanks, "to Him that sat on the Throne, who lives forever and forever."

Better still, let us hear the witness of our own Redeemer, in the fifth of John's Gospel, at the twenty-sixth verse, where He declares that, "the Father has life in Himself." My Brethren, you need not that I marshal in array a host of confirmative passages, for the eternal Self-Existence of God is taught throughout the Scriptures, and is implied in that name which belongs only to the true God, Jehovah, "I Am that I Am," where, note that it is not "I was," which would imply that in some measure or respect He had ceased to be.

Nor is it "I will be," which would intimate that He is not now what He will be, but I AM, the only Being, the root of Existence, the Immutable, and Eternal One. "We," as a venerable Puritan observes, "have more of nothing than of being," but it is God's prerogative to BE. He alone can say, "I am God, and beside Me there is none else." He declares, "I lift up My hands to Heaven, and say I live forever." He is the One only underived, Self-Existent, Self-Sustained Being. Let us know of a surety that the Lord God whom we worship is the only Being who necessarily and from His own Nature, Exists.

No other being could have been but for His Sovereign will, nor could it continue were that will suspended. He is the only light of life, all others are reflections of His beams. There must be God, but there was no such necessity that there should be any other intelligences. In all

the future God must Be, but the necessity for the continuance of other spirits lies in His will and not in the very nature of things. There was a time when the creatures were not. They came from Him as vessels from the potter's wheel. They all depend upon Him for continuance, as the streamlet on the fountain from where it flows.

And if it were His will, they all would melt away as the foam upon the water. That immortality of spirits implied in such passages as Matthew 25:46, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal," is the result of His own resolve to make spirits whose duration should be eternal. And though He will never withdraw the endowment of immortality which He has bestowed, yet the reason for eternal existence is not in the beings, but entirely in Himself, for essentially, "He only has immortality"--

"He can create and He destroy." All that is, whether material or intellectual, if so it had pleased God to ordain, might have been as transient as a sunbeam and have vanished as speedily as the rainbow from the cloud. If anything now exists of necessity, that necessity sprang from God, and still depends upon the necessity of Divine Decree. God is independent--the only being who is so. We must find food with which to repair the daily wastes of the body. We are dependent upon light and heat, and innumerable external agencies--and above all we are primarily dependent upon the outgoings of the Divine power towards us. But the I AM is Self-Sufficient and All-Sufficient--

"He sits on no precarious throne, Nor borrows leave to be."

He was as glorious before He made the world as He is now. He was as great, as blessed, as Divine in all His attributes before sun and moon and stars leaped into existence as He is now. And if He should blot all out as a man erases the writing of his pen, or as a potter breaks the vessel he has made, He would be none the less the supreme and

ever-blessed God.

Nothing of God's Being is derived from another, but all that exists is derived from Him. You hills and mountains, you seas and stars, you men and angels, you heavens and you Heaven of heavens--you minister nothing to Him who made you--you all stand up together in existence flowing from your Creator. God ever lives in this respect, that He undergoes no sort of change. All His creatures must, from their constitution, undergo more or less of mutation. Of them all it is decreed, "They shall perish, but You shall endure: yes, all of them shall wax old like a garment. As a vesture shall You change them, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall have no end."

Our life is made up of changes. From childhood we hasten to youth, from youth we leap to manhood, from manhood we fade into old age. Our changes are as many as our days. "The creature" is, indeed, in our case, "made subject to vanity." Lighter than a feather, more frail than the flower of the field, brittle as glass, fleeting as a meteor, tossed to and fro like a ball, and quenched as a spark--"Lord, what is man?"

There comes to us all in the time appointed the great and ultimate change when the spirit is separated from the body--to be followed by another in which the divided manhood shall be re-united. But with God there are no changes of this or any other kind. Has He not declared, "I am God, I change not"?

God is essentially and evermore pure Spirit, and consequently undergoes no variableness nor shadow of a turning. Of none of the creatures can this be said. Immutability is an attribute of God only. The things created were once new--they are waxing old--they will become older still. But the Lord has no time, He dwells in eternity. There is no moment of beginning with the Eternal, no starting point from which to calculate age. From of old He was the Ancient of Days, "from

everlasting to everlasting You are God."

Let your mind retreat as far as its capacities will allow into the remote past of old eternity, and there it finds Jehovah alone in the fullness of His glory. Then let the same thought flash forward into the far off future, as far as imagination can bear it, and there it beholds the Eternal, unchanged, unchangeable. He works changes and effects changes, but He Himself abides the same. Brethren, let us worship Him with words like these--

"Your throne eternal ages stood, Before seas or stars were made. You are the Ever-Living God. Were all the nations dead. Eternity with all its years, Stands present in Your view To You there's nothing old appears Great God! There's nothing new. Our lives through various scenes are drawn, And vexed with trifling cares, While Your eternal thought moves on Your undisturbed affairs."

That He lives forever is the result, not only of His essential and necessary Self-Existence, of His independence, and of His unchangeableness, but of the fact that there is no conceivable force that can ever wound, injure, or destroy Him. If we were profane enough to imagine the Lord to be vulnerable, yet where is the bow and where the arrow that could reach Him on His Throne? What javelin shall pierce Jehovah's buckler? Let all the nations of the earth rise and rage against God, how shall they reach His Throne? They cannot even shake His footstool.

If all the angels of Heaven should rebel against the Great King, and their squadrons should advance in serried ranks to besiege the palace of the Most High, He has but to will it, and they would wither as autumn leaves, or consume as the fat upon the altar. Reserved in chains of darkness, the opponents of His power would forever become mementos of His wrath. None can touch Him. He is the God that ever lives. Let us

who delight in the living God bow down before Him, and humbly worship Him as the God in whom we live and move, and have our being.

In our text we next find Nebuchadnezzar asserting the everlasting dominion of God. He says, "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation." The God whom we serve not only exists, but reigns. No other position would become Him but that of unlimited Sovereign over all His creatures. "The most high God, possessor of Heaven and earth has prepared His Throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all." As David said so, we say also, "Yours O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heaven and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all." "The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever."

The Lord is naturally the Ruler of all, but who shall pretend to rule over Him? He is not to be judged of man's finite reason for He does great things which we cannot comprehend. Amazing is the impertinence of man, when the creature dares to sit in judgment on the Creator! His Character is not to be impugned or called into question. Only the boundless arrogance of our pride would so dare to insult the thrice holy God. "Be still, and know that I am God," is a sufficient reply to such madness. The Lord's place is on the Throne, and our place is to obey. It is His to govern, ours to serve--His to do as He wills, and ours, without questioning, to make that will our constant delight.

Remember, then, that in the universe God is actually reigning.

Never let us conceive of God as being infinitely great, but not exerting His greatness--infinitely able to reign--but as yet a mere spectator of events. It is not so. The Lord reigns even now. Though in one sense we pray, "Your kingdom come," yet in another we say, "Yours

is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever." The Throne of the universe is not vacant, nor its power in abeyance. God does not hold a bare title to kingship--He is actually King. The government is upon His shoulders, the reins of management are in His hands. Even at this hour He speaks to the sons of men, "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive. I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand."

Before your very eyes He has fulfilled His word. (Luke 1:51, 52.) Events appear to fly at random like the dust in the whirlwind, but it is not so. The rule of the Omnipotent extends over all things at all times. Nothing is left to its own chance happening, but in wisdom all things are governed. Glory be unto the Omnipresent and Invisible Lord of All!

This Divine kingdom appeared very plainly to the once proud monarch of Babylon, to be an everlasting one. The reign of the Ever-Living extends as other kingdoms cannot, "from generation to generation." The mightiest king inherits power and soon yields his scepter to his successor. The Lord has no beginning of days nor end of years--predecessor or successor are words inapplicable to Him. Other monarchies stand while their power is not subdued, but in an evil hour a greater power may crush them down. There is no greater power than God--there is no other power but that which proceeds from God, for, "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this. That power belongs unto God." Therefore His monarchy cannot be subdued, and must be everlasting.

Dynasties have passed away, dying out for lack of heirs, but God the Ever-Living asks none to succeed Him and to perpetuate His name. Internal corruptions have often blasted empires which stood aloft like

forest trees, defiant of the storm--at the core the tree was rotten, and before long, weakened by decay--it tottered to its fall. But the infinitely Holy God has no injustice, error, partiality, or evil motive in the government of His affairs--everything is arranged with spotless holiness, unimpeachable justice, unvarying fidelity, untarnished truth, amazing mercy, and overflowing love. All the elements of His kingdom are most conservative, because radically right. There is no evil leaven in the council chamber of Omniscience, no corruption on the Judgment Seat of Heaven. Therefore, "His Throne is established in righteousness." Because His Throne is holy we rejoice that it can never be moved.

Pause here, dear Hearer, and let your soul's eye behold again this view of things. God has reigned from the first day, God shall reign when days are gone. Everywhere He is the reigning God--reigning when Pharaoh said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey Him?" as much as when Miriam took her timbrel, and said, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." He was reigning when Scribe and Pharisee, Jew and Roman, nailed His Only Begotten Son to the Cross, as much as when the angelic cohorts shouted in triumph, "Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lift up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in."

He is reigning amid all the calamities which sweep the globe as much as He shall be in the halcyon days of peace. Never is the Throne vacant, never is the scepter laid aside. Jehovah is always King, and shall be King forever and forever. Oh, happy subjects, who have such a Throne to look to! Oh, blessed children, who have such a King to be your Father! You, as a royal priesthood, may feel your royalties and your priesthoods both secure for this unconquerable King sits securely on His Throne. Your monarch has not yielded up His sword to a superior

foe. You have not to search for another leader. In the Person of His dear Son He walks among our golden candlesticks, and holds our stars in His right hand. He keeps Israel, and never slumbers nor sleeps.

But we must hasten on. Nebuchadnezzar, humbled before God, uses, in the third place, extraordinary language with regard to the nothingness of mankind. "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing."

This is Nebuchadnezzar, but his words are confirmed by Isaiah, "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket," the unnoticed drop which remains in the bucket after it has been emptied into the trough, or the drip which falls from it as it is uplifted from the well--a thing too inconsiderable to be worthy of notice. "And are counted as the small dust of the balance." As the dust which falls upon scales, but is not sufficient to affect the balance in any degree whatever.

"Behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing." Whole archipelagos He uplifts as unconsidered trifles. This triple kingdom of ours He reckons not only to be little, but "a very little thing." The vast island of Australia, the gems of the Pacific, the nations of the Southern Ocean, all these He handles as children lift their toys. "All nations before Him are as nothing. And they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity." So if Nebuchadnezzar goes far, Isaiah, inspired of the Spirit, goes farther. The one calls the nations "nothing," and the other "less than nothing," and "vanity."

You will find the passage in the fortieth of Isaiah, at the fifteenth and seventeenth verses. Now mark the force of each word, "all the inhabitants of the earth," not some of them only, not the poor ones among them, but the rich, the kings, the wise, the philosophers, the priests--all put together--"are as nothing." What an assembly would there be if all the

nations could be gathered together! An impressive spectacle rises

before my vision! One had need possess an eagle's wing merely to pass over the mighty congregation. Where could a plain be found which could contain them all? Yet all of them, says the text, are, "as nothing."

Now, observe they are so in themselves, for concerning all of us who are gathered here it is certain that there was a time when we were not--we were then in very deed "nothing." At this very moment, also, if God wills it, we may cease to be, and so in a step return to nothing.

We are nothing in ourselves, we are only what He chooses to allow us to be, and when the time comes and it will be a very short time, so far as this world is concerned, we shall be nothing. All that will remain of us among the sons of men will be some little hillock in a cemetery or a country Churchyard, for we shall have no part in anything which is done under the sun.

Of what account at this day, my Brethren, are all the antediluvian millions? What are the hosts of Nimrod, of Shishak, of Sennacherib, of Cyrus? What reeks the world of the myriads who followed the march of Nebuchadnezzar, who obeyed the beck of Cyrus, who passed away before the eye of Xerxes? Where are the generations which owned the sovereignty of Alexander, or the legions which followed and almost adored the eagles of the Caesars? Alas, even our grandsires, where are they? Our sons forewarn us that we must die. Have they not been born to bury us? So pass the generations like the successive series of forest leaves. And what are they but at their best estate, "altogether vanity?"

The nations are nothing in comparison with God. As you may place as many ciphers as you like together, and they all make nothing, so you may add up as many men, with all their supposed force and wisdom, as you please, and they are all nothing in comparison with God. He is the Unit. He stands for All in All, and comprehends all. And all the rest

are but so many valueless ciphers till His Unity makes them of account. Here let me remind you that every man who is spiritually taught of God is made to feel experimentally on his own account his own utter nothingness. When his inner eye, like that of Job, beholds the Lord, he abhors himself, he shrinks into the earth, he feels he cannot contrast or compare himself with the Most High even for a single second. "Great God, how infinite are You! What worthless worms are we!" is the verse which naturally leaps to the lip of any man who knows himself and knows his God.

Spiritually, our nothingness is very conspicuous. We were nothing in our election--"You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calls." "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." We were nothing in our redemption. We contributed nothing to that price which Jesus paid--"I have trod the winepress alone. And of the people there was none with Me." We are nothing in our regeneration--can the spiritually dead help the blessed God to quicken them? "It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing." "We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus." We shall, when we get to Heaven, make it part of our adoration to confess that we are less than nothing and vanity, but that God is All in All. Therefore shall we cast our crowns at His feet, and give Him all the praise forever and ever.

"The inhabitants of the earth are as nothing." It is a wonderful expression, and you see I do not attempt to expound it or any part of the text. I rather repeat words of the same meaning with the text by way of illustration. Before me is a great deep, and who shall fathom it? I would not darken counsel by words without knowledge. If there

were an ant's nest somewhere in a farmer's estate and suppose he had ten thousand acres of land. That ant's nest would bear some portion, though a very small one, to the ten thousand acres of land. It could not be so strictly said to be as nothing as the whole world can when compared with God.

This round earth bears a very insignificant proportion to the vast creation of God, even to that which is revealed to us by the telescope. And we have reason to believe that all which can be seen with the telescope--if indeed it is a mass of worlds, and all inhabited--is but as a pin's prick compared with the city of London, to the far-reaching universe. If it is so, and your mind were capable of compassing the entire creation of God, yet it would be only as a drop of a bucket compared with God Himself who made it all, and could make ten thousand times ten thousand as much, and then be but at the beginning of His power.

This world, then, bears no such proportion to the Lord as an ant's nest to the estate of ten thousand acres. Now if the farmer wishes to till the soil, it is not at all probable that he will take any cognizance whatever of that ant's nest in
the arrangement of his affairs. And in all probability will overturn and destroy it. This proves the insignificance of the emmet, and the greatness of man as compared with ants. But as it involves a degree of forgetfulness or overlooking on the farmer's part, the ants are great enough to be forgotten--but the nations are not great enough even for that. If it were possible for the farmer to arrange without difficulty all his plans so that without disturbing his proceedings, every bird, emmet, and worm should be cared for in his scheme, how great then would he be compared with the ants!

And this is just the case with the Lord--He so arranges all things that

apparently without effort the government of Providence embraces all interests, wrongs none, but yields justice to all. Men are so little in the way of God that He never finds it necessary to perpetrate an injustice even on a single man, and He has never caused one solitary creature to suffer one unnecessary pang. Herein is His greatness, that it comprehends all littleness without a strain--the glory of His wisdom is as astonishing as the majesty of His power, and the splendors of His love and of His Grace are as amazing as the terror of His Sovereignty. He may do what He wills, for none can stop Him. But He never wills to do in any case anything that is unjust, unholy, unmerciful, or in any way inconsistent with the perfection of His matchless Character. Here let us pause, and worship. I at least must do so. For my soul's eyes ache, as though I had been gazing at the sun.

We turn now to the next sentence, which reveals the Divine power at work sovereignly. "He does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." This is easy to understand in reference to the celestial host, for we know that God's will is done in Heaven--we devoutly pray that it may yet be done on earth after the same fashion. The angels find it their Heaven to be obedient to the God of Heaven. Under the term, "army of Heaven," is comprehended fallen angels who were once numbered with that band, but were expelled from Heaven for their rebellion.

Devils unwillingly, but yet of necessity, fulfill the will of God. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in Heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." When we read in the text that on earth God's will is done, we see that it is so in a measure among the righteous whose renewed hearts seek after God's glory. But the Truth goes further, for that will is also accomplished in the unrighteous, and by those who know Him not. Yes, in those whose will is determined

to oppose Him--but in some way unknown to us the will of God is still achieved (Prov. 19:21; Acts 4:27, 28.)

I can understand a man taking so many pieces of wood and arranging them just as he pleases, nor can I see any very remarkable skill in so doing. But the miracle of Divine Glory lies in this--that He has made men free agents, has endowed them with a will with which He never interferes except according to the laws of mind. That He leaves them absolutely free to do what they will, and they will universally of themselves to do contrary to His will. And yet, such is the magnificent strategy of Heaven, such is the marvelous force of the Divine mind, that despite everything, the will of God is done!

Some have supposed that when we believe with David, in Psalm 65, that God has done whatever He has pleased, we deny free agency, and of necessity moral responsibility also. No, but we declare that those who would do so are tinctured with the old captious spirit of him who said, "Why does He yet find fault, for who has resisted His will?" And our only answer is that of Paul, "No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?" Can you understand it, for I cannot-- how man is a free agent, a responsible agent, so that his sin is his own willful sin and lies with him and never with God-- and yet at the same time God's purposes are fulfilled, and His will is done even by demons and corrupt men?

I cannot comprehend it, but without hesitation I believe it, and rejoice to do so. I never hope to comprehend it. I worship a God I never expect to comprehend. If I could grasp Him in the hollow of my hand, I could not call Him my God. And if I could understand His dealings so that I could read them as a child reads his spelling book, I could not worship Him. But because He is so infinitely great I find Truth here, Truth there, Truth multiform. And if I cannot compress it

into one system-I know it is all clear to Him--and I am content that He should know what I know not.

It is mine today to adore and obey--by-and-by when He sees fit I shall know more and adore better. It is my firm belief that everything in Heaven, and earth, and Hell will be seen to be, in the long run, parts of the Divine Plan. Yet never is God the Author or the accomplice of sin--never is He otherwise than the Hater of sin and the Avenger of unrighteousness. Sin rests with man, wholly with man, and yet by some strange overruling force, Godlike and mysterious, like the existence of God, His supreme will is accomplished. Observe how the two truths combine in practice, and are stated in the same verse in reference to our Lord's crucifixion, in Acts 2:23--"Him, being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

Now, to deny this Truth because we cannot understand it, were to shut ourselves out of a great deal of important knowledge. Brethren, if God does not rule everywhere, then something rules where He does not, and so He is not Omnipresent supreme. If God does not have His will, someone else does, and so far that someone is a rival to God. I never deny the free agency of man, or diminish his responsibility, but I dare never invest the free will of man with Omnipotence, for this were to make man into a sort of God, an idolatry to be loathed.

Moreover, admit chance anywhere, and you have admitted chance everywhere, for all events are related and act on one another. One cog of the wheel of Providence disarranged or left to Satan, or man's absolute freedom apart from God, would spoil the whole machinery. I dare not believe even sin itself to be exempt from the control of Providence, or from the overruling dominion of the Judge of all the earth. Without Providence we were unhappy beings. Without the

universality of the Divine power, Providence would be imperfect, and in some points we might be left unprotected and exposed to those evils which are, by this theory, supposed to be beyond Divine control. Happy are we that it is true, "the Lord does as He wills in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

Let us now consider the fifth part of the text--"None can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What do you?" I gather from this that God's fiat is irresistible and unimpeachable. We are told by some annotators that the original has in it an allusion to a blow given to a child's hand to make him cease from some forbidden action. None can treat the Lord in that manner. None can hinder Him, or cause Him to pause. He has might to do what He wills. So also says Isaiah--"Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What make you? Or your work, He has no hands?"

Man is powerless, then, to resist the fiat of God. Usually he does not know God's design, although he blunderingly thinks he does--often in opposing that apparent design he fulfils the secret design of God against his will. If man did know God's design, and should set himself with all his might against it, yet as the chaff cannot resist the wind, as it is not possible for the wax to resist the fire, so neither can man effectually resist the absolute will and Sovereign good pleasure of the Most High. Only here is our comfort--it is right that God should have this might, because He always uses His might with strictest rectitude. God cannot will to do anything unjust, ungenerous, unkind, ungod-like.

No laws bind Him as they bind us, but He is a Law to Himself. There is, "You shall," and, "You shall not," for me, for you--but who shall put, "You shall," to God, or who shall say, "You shall not"? Who shall

attempt to be legislator for the King of kings? God is Love. God is Holiness. God is the Law. God is Love, and doing as He wills, He wills to love. God is Holy, and doing as He wills, He wills holiness, He wills Justice, He wills Truth. And though there were raised a thousand questions as to how is this just? How is that loving? How is that wise? The one sufficient answer is--

"God is His own interpreter And He will make it plain."

O sons of men, it is not for me to solve the enigmas of the Infinite, he shall explain Himself. I am not so impertinent as to be His apologist, He shall clear Himself. I am not called to vindicate His Character. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" What folly to hold up a candle to show the brightness of the sun! How much more foolish to attempt to defend the thrice holy Jehovah! Let Him speak for Himself if He will deign to contend with you. If you do but hear His thunders, how you tremble! When His lightning sets the heavens on fire, how amazed you are! Stand forth, then, and question Him if you dare. If you are at sea in a storm, when every timber of your vessel creaks, when the mast is broken, when the mariners stagger like drunken men, when overhead is the horrible tempest, and the thundering voice of God in the tempest, and all around you the howling winds, then cease your caviling, and cry unto Him in your trouble. Act, then, this day as you would do in such a case, for you are equally in His hands. (Psalm 99:1, 5; 1OO:3, 4). Thus have I tried to set forth the doctrine of the text.

II. Now, very briefly, consider its PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION. I think the first lesson is how wise to be at one with Him! As I bowed before the majesty of this text in my study, I felt within my soul, "Oh, how I long to be perfectly at one with this infinitely mighty, glorious and holy God. How can I dare to be His enemy?" I felt then if I had not yielded before, I must yield now, subdued before Him. I would that any

of you who are not doing His will would give up your hopeless rebellion. He invites you to come. He might have commanded you to depart. In His infinite Sovereignty He has appointed Christ Jesus to be the Savior of men. Come and accept that Savior by faith.

How encouraging this is to those who are at one with God! If He is on our side, who shall be against us? "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." We ought to be of the same mind as that believing woman who, during an earthquake, was observed to be very happy. Everybody else was afraid--houses were falling, towers were rocking, but she

smiled. And when they asked her why, she replied, "I am so glad to find that my God can shake the world. I believed He could, and now I see that He can."

Be glad that you have One to trust in to whom nothing is impossible, who can and will achieve His purposes. My heart feels that she would give Him the power if He had it not, and if it were all mine. I would leave all power in His hands even if I could remove it. "Great God, reign You supremely, for there is none like unto You." "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." How joyful this thought ought to be to all holy workers! You and I have enlisted on the side of God and of His Christ, and, though the powers against us seem very strong, yet the invincible King will surely put them to rout before long.

Romanism, idolatry, infidelity--these all appear mighty things. And so seem those pots fresh from the potter--a child thinks them to be stone. But when the Lord Jesus smites them with the rod of iron, see how the potsherds fly! This shall He do before long. He will lift the might of His terrible arm and bring down His iron rod! Then shall it be seen that the Truth of God as it is in Jesus must and shall prevail.

How this should help you that suffer! If God does it all, and nothing happens apart from God, even the wickedness and cruelty of man being still overruled by Him, you readily may submit. How graciously and with what good face can you kiss the hand which smites you! The husband is gone to Heaven, God took him. The property has melted, God has permitted it. You were robbed, you say--well, think not so much of the second cause, look to the great first cause. You strike a dog, he bites the stick. If he were wise, he would look at you who use it.

Do not look at the second cause of the afflictions, look to the great first cause. It is your God who is in it all, your Father God, the Infinitely good. Which would you desire to have done on earth, your will or God's will? If you are wise, you say, "Not my will, but Yours be done." Then accept the ways of Providence. Since God appoints them, accept them with grateful praise. Herein is true sacrifice to God when we can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We have received good at His hands, and we have blessed Him--heathen men and publicans might have done that. But if we receive evil and still bless Him, this is Divine Grace, this is the work of His Holy Spirit!

If we can bow before His crushing strokes, and feel that if the crushing of us by the weight of His hand will bring Him honor, we are content. This is true faith. Give us Grace enough, O Lord, never to fail in our loyalty, but to be Your faithful servants even to sufferings' bitterest end. Oh, to have the mind thus subjected to God!

Some kick at the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, but I fear it is because they have a rebellious, unhumbled spirit. Those who feel obedient to God cannot have God cried up too much, cannot yield Him too absolute an authority. Only a rebellious child in a house wishes the father to be tied by rules and regulations. No, my Father must do right, let Him do what He wills!

III. What is THE RIGHT SPIRIT in which to contemplate all this? The first is humble adoration. We do not worship enough, my Brethren. Even in our public gatherings we do not have enough worship. O worship the King! Bow your heads now--bow your spirits, rather, and adore Him that lives forever and ever. Your thoughts, your emotions--these are better than bullocks and he-goats to be offered on the altar--God will accept them. Worship Him with lowliest reverence, for you are nothing, and He is All in All. Next let the spirit of your hearts be that of unquestioning acquiescence. He wills it! I will do it or I will bear it. God help you to live in perfect resignation.

Next to that, exercise the spirit of reverent love. Do I tremble before this God? Then I must seek more Grace that I may love Him as He is. Not love Him when my thoughts have diminished Him of His splendor, and robbed Him of His Glory, but love Him even as an absolute Sovereign, for I see that sovereignty exercised through Jesus Christ, my Shield and His Anointed. Let me love my God and King, and be a courtier, happy to be admitted near His Throne, to behold the light of the Infinite Majesty.

Lastly, let our spirit be that of profound delight. I believe there is no doctrine to the advanced Christian which contains such a deep sea of delight as this. The Lord reigns! The Lord is King forever and ever! Why, then all is well! When you get away from God, you get away from peace. When the soul dives into Him, and feels that all is in Him, then she feels a calm delight, a peace like a river, a joy unspeakable. Strive after that delight this morning, my Beloved, and then go and express it in your songs of praise.

If you are alone this afternoon, any of you, and not engaged in service, be sure to bless and magnify your God. Lift up your hearts in His praise, for "whoso offers praise glorifies God." May the Lord bring

us all, through faith in Jesus Christ, into harmony with this ever-blessed and ever-living God, and unto Him be praise and glory forever and forever. Amen.

Chapter 42

Means for Restoring the Banished

(No. 950)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Neither does God respect any person: yet does He devise means, that His banished are not expelled from Him." 2Samuel 14:14.

THE woman of Tekoah, in arguing with David for the recall of his son Absalom, argued with great shrewdness. After craftily entrapping the king by her parable, she then pleaded with him in persuasive terms--the cleverness of which we must admire--though the end aimed at was not consistent with the impartial justice which every magistrate ought to exercise. In effect she pleaded thus--"It is true that Absalom slew his brother Amnon. But nevertheless spare his life, and permit him to return from exile. What is done cannot be undone. Death is the common lot of all, and one way or another we must all become like water spilt upon the ground which cannot be gathered up.

"By the death of his brother the slain man cannot be brought to life again. Have pity, therefore, upon Absalom, and quench not the coal of Israel's hope by executing the death penalty on your successor. It is true you must have no respect to persons, neither does God have any, but still He has been pleased in His infinite mercy to ordain a way by which the refugee manslayer may be restored to his home." It was well known to David that on the death of the High Priest, man-slayers who had found shelter in the cities set apart for refuge were allowed to go home and take full possession of their lands, being by the High Priest's death absolved from further liability to revengeful kinsmen of

their victims, and allowed to mingle with other Israelites in the worship of God.

"God then," says she, "has devised means by which His banished should not always be expelled from Him--do you likewise. Though Absalom may have fled for awhile, and been in banishment, have pity upon your son, and restore him." Thus much concerning the woman's argument, and no more. She gained her point, and we hear no more of her, nor need we think further of her and her shrewdness.

Last Sunday morning we addressed you upon the infinite grandeur of God, upon His Sovereignty, and the way in which He exercises His will, unaided of mortal hand. Now, from the greatness of God to His mercy is no step, for the two should always be blended in our thoughts as they are in His Nature. Great as He is, He stoops to consider His side, His creatures, and Sovereign though He is, His name is Love. He regards not the person of any man, for what is man to God? What is man that God is mindful of him, or the son of man that He visits him? Man is so utterly insignificant in comparison with God, that whole nations are as nothing--yes, less than nothing and vanity.

Yet despite the greatness of God, His wisdom is put to work to devise means by which guilty ones who have been banished from Him may be restored to Him. And it is of this devising means, this blessed thoughtfulness and ingenuity for restoring His banished ones that I hope to have Divine Grace given me to speak this morning. First we shall talk with you upon our first outlawry, and how God devises means to deliver us from that. Secondly, we shall speak upon some secondary banishments through which certain of God's people have passed, and how God devises means to bring them back from those. And lastly, we shall have a practical lesson to gather from the subject.

I. First, there was A GREAT AND UNIVERSAL OUTLAWRY proclaimed by God

against us all, as members of a rebel race. We have all broken His Law. Willfully and wickedly have we rebelled against the majesty of Heaven. We are, therefore, in our natural estate, banished ones--expelled from His love and favor--waiting the time when the sentence of His wrath shall be fulfilled, and, "Depart, you cursed," shall flash its lightning flame into our spirits. The Ever-Blessed God has devised means by which we may be delivered from this state of exile. And the means are very similar to that which was alluded to by the woman of Tekoah.

He has set apart Jesus Christ to be to us a City of Refuge and a High Priest, and precisely what occurred to the man-slayer occurs to us. Now, what did happen to the manslayer? First of all, as soon as he had killed a man inadvertently,

knowing that the next of kin would be after him to avenge the death, he fled, hot foot, as we say, to the nearest City of Refuge. And when he had once reached the gates of that city, he was secure. Dear Brothers and Sisters, even thus the Lord Jesus Christ was to us in days gone by a City of Refuge, and we fled to Him. Do you not remember the moment when you passed the portal, and were safe within the salvation which God appoints for walls and bulwarks?

It was a happy thing to feel secure from vengeance. It was delightful to be able to feel--"Sin may pursue me, but it cannot slay me. The blood of Jesus stands between me and punishment. I am now, through my Substitute, secured from the wrath to come." Happy day when we thus began to realize that we were safe in the Savior, shielded by the Atonement. At the first we thought this was all, and we were content that it should be all. But after awhile deeper Truths of God began to open up to us, and the type was more completely fulfilled.

The manslayer was bound to remain within the City of Refuge. He was a

sort of prisoner on parole within the city bounds--if he went beyond the liberties of the town for any purpose, or on any pretense, he did it at his own risk, and was liable to be slain by any kinsman of the person whom he had killed. The Law only protected him while he remained within its appointed sanctuary. This banishment might continue for years, and the manslayer might die away from his native village, and the portion of land which belonged to his family. But if it so happened that the High Priest died, he and all others who had been sheltered within the city walls required that shelter no more.

They were clear from all further vengeance. They could return to their homes without risk of being slain. Their liberty was complete. So I trust many of us have learned that we are not only safe through the blood of Jesus, but what is far better--we are absolved from sin. We are not now as men shut up from punishment--but as acquitted men against whom no charge can be laid--we walk at large. We dread no condemnation now, for our High Priest has died. At first we felt safe, but that feeling was clogged with conditions and limitations. But now we know that, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

We are certain that we are clear before the Judgment Seat of God, and shall stand without fear before the Great White Throne, when in full blaze of holiness Divine Justice shall be revealed. We are emancipated from the bondage of the Law through the death of our Ever-Blessed High Priest. The manslayer went home, and if anyone had taken possession of his estate during his absence, he turned him out. And if the vines and fig trees had been untrimmed, he put them into the right fruit-bearing state. And if the fields had grown cumbered with weeds, he began to till them afresh.

When the holy festivals came round, he who had been an exile before

could go up with the great company that kept holy day without fear of being attacked by the avenger of blood. He had no blood-guiltiness upon him any longer, the death of the High Priest had ceremonially made him clean and admitted him into the throng of worshippers. And here is the joy of the Believer--all that he had lost by sin is restored to him by Christ's death! This world is his and worlds to come. He uses the once forfeited blessings of this life for his Master's glory, believing them no longer to be common or unclean. Now he mingles with the most joyous of the saints.

For him their holy song, for him their access with confidence into the Grace wherein we stand. He rejoices that through the death of Jesus, the High Priest, he is perfectly restored to all the rights and liberties of the Israel of God. Oh, what a blessing this is! And what a means has God devised for the complete restoring of His exiles! This is a method worthy of our God. Jesus died instead of us! Jesus suffered the death penalty on our behalf--our faith makes His substitu-tionary sacrifice to be ours, and in that moment we have no longer ground for fear! We are discharged from every dread! We walk in blessed liberty, we see our privileges and avail ourselves of them. Jesus has restored that which He took not away--

"In Him the sons of Adam boast More blessings than their father lost."

Thus has God ordained a most effectual means that His banished are not expelled from Him.

Though this is the grand means for restoring exiled man to communion with his God, yet through the depravity of our nature it would fail to be of any service to us, did not God further ordain means to make us willing to avail ourselves of it. There was need, not only to spread a feast of mercy, but to constrain us to partake of it. When we hear of salvation by Jesus, our proud nature at once rejects Him. We listen to

the wondrous story of a substitutionary sacrifice, but like the Jews we require a sign, or as the Greeks, we seek after some fancied wisdom. He comes unto His own, and His own receive
him not. Therefore the Lord further devises means by which the sacrifice of Jesus shall be accepted by us, and shall become our confidence.

The Holy Spirit is specially appointed to work salvation in us--He subdues the will, and converts the heart. He leads sinners to Jesus, and applies the cleansing blood to their consciences. He draws with mysterious influences till the unwilling heart relents. If we will not of ourselves run to the refuge city, messengers are sent to invite, to persuade, to compel us to come in. God wills not that His love should be baffled--He resolves to save. He devises means to convert the sinner. And now let each one of us think for a minute of his own case. It will be a gracious exercise for each Believer here to remember the special way which God devised to bring him to Jesus. Turn over now your life-records, and read the page which records your spiritual birthday, and trace the hand of God in your conversion, each one of you. I may help you by mentioning a few of the more prominent means which Grace employs.

In most cases it is the preaching of the Gospel which restores the wandering. The preaching of the Word is God's great saving agency among mankind. How gracious is God to ordain a means so simple, yet by His Grace, so efficient! How wondrously does He co-work with His ministers so that His Word shall not return unto Him void! Many of His chosen, but banished ones, are so far off in their exile that they will not come to hear the message of Grace. God therefore devises means to bring them where the Truth is declared. Not a few are led to hear the Truth from the force of education and custom, and of these, great numbers are

effectually called.

But others, apparently less favored, are brought by equally successful methods. Some are induced by a friend to come, and they thus hear the Gospel out of courtesy to him who invited them. Yet in many cases the gracious Lord has saved by the Word those whom that feeble motive brought within its reach. Another class feel the stimulus of an equally undeserving motive. A certain preacher may be much spoken of. He may be a reputed eccentric, or railed at as fanatical. At any rate, he has a name, and therefore hundreds are drawn to his ministry out of curiosity. This is not commendable in them, but it is often overruled by God, for, like Zaccheus, they are called by Jesus, and He abides in their house.

Curiosity is one of the means which God devises for bringing men to hear His Gospel, that thereby He may lead back His banished--that they be not expelled from Him. There have even been cases of persons who have heard the Gospel from worse motives than these. They have been actuated even by blasphemy and profanity, yet, strange to say it, God's all-conquering Grace has made even this to be the way by which His banished ones should be brought back to Him. The memorable case of Mr. Thorpe, a noted preacher of the Gospel, rises to one's mind here. He was, before his conversion, a member of an infidel club.

In those days infidelity was more coarse than now. And this skeptical society took the name of the "Hell Fire Club." Among their amusements was that of holding imitations of religious services, and exhibiting mimicries of popular ministers. Young Thorpe went to hear Mr. Whitfield, that he might mimic him before his profane associates. He heard him so carefully that he caught his tones and his manner, and somewhat of his doctrines. When the club met to see his caricature of the great preacher, Thorpe opened a big Bible that he might take a text

to preach from it extempore after the manner of Mr. Whitfield. His eye fell on the passage, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." As he spoke upon that text he was carried beyond himself, lost all thought of mockery, spoke as one in earnest, and was the means of his own conversion!

He was likely to say, in after years, "If ever I was helped of God to preach, it was that very day when I began in sport but ended in earnest." He was carried by the force of Truth beyond his own intention, like one who would sport in a river, and is swept away by its current. From a thousand instances I gather that a man is in the way of hope while hearing the Word. Who can tell? The scoffer may be reached by the arrows of Truth. Where shots are flying, the most careless may be wounded. God, who makes use of His ministers as He wills, can bring His banished home by His Word, even though the hearer had far other motives in hearing it.

Even a minister's failures may be a part of God's ordained scheme of salvation. We sometimes feel, after we have finished our discourse, that we have done very badly, but we are poor judges of our own work. If we have earnestly done our best, God may have turned our thoughts in a direction in which our words may have failed us. But the Truth of God may have been, for all that, more powerful for that very reason. When most out of our way, we may be most in God's way. The archer who drew his bow at a venture, little thought of piercing the joints of Ahab's armor, yet his arrow did the work well.

Holy Mr. Tennant, in America, had with great care studied a sermon, because he knew that an eminent skeptic was likely to attend the service. He hoped that a sound argument might win his hearer, but in his intense earnestness he became too absorbed to follow out the chain of his reasoning, his speech faltered, and though generally a man

remarkable for eloquence, he came to a standstill, and concluded the service abruptly. This, however, was the means of the conversion of his skeptical friend. For as he had often heard Mr. Tennant before, and noticed how remarkably well he had spoken, and had now regretted his painful hesitation, he said within himself, "There is evidently such a thing as the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for Mr. Tennant has been helped at other times, and not on this occasion." That one gleam of Truth sufficed to show him other truths, and he became converted to God.

Oh, blessed blundering, blessed faltering, blessed breaking-down! If it is a part of God's means by which His banished may be brought back, gladly would I be dumb and forfeit the sweet luxury of fluent speech, if my silence would better serve the purpose of my Lord! I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit often works most when our feebleness is most apparent. Our infirmity we may well glory in, if such is the case. Certainly, the wonder-working God is pleased to send us as His ambassadors, and by our means He brings back those whom sin had banished from His Presence.

But, Beloved, besides the vocal preaching of the Gospel, the printed word of God, itself, is a preacher through the eye. Holy Scripture has often been the sole means in the hands of its Divine Author of converting the soul. Many texts of Scripture are notable as soul-winning words. God works through the sacred page, and gives light to the ignorant. Think how God works with His Word, how frequently the ungodly eye has been directed to the precise passage that should be the power of God unto salvation! Why did not that hand turn over another page, and that eye light on another verse? The Lord was there to fix the glance where the blessing lay!

How frequently the Words of Scripture have seemed to the reader to be

meant on purpose for him! The exact turn of thought and form of expression have been the channels of blessing. I can never refuse to believe in plenary inspiration while I have before me so many instances in which the mere tense, number and position of certain Words have been the instruments of quickening and consolation. In the very Words of Scripture I see devices for bringing home the banished. That the mind should be prepared for the text is equally remarkable, because there must have been workings of Providence and more spiritual influences in operation to make the mind ready for the peculiar teaching of that chosen text.

I see clearly an elaborate machinery at work--wheel revolves within wheel, cause acts upon cause, event upon event, thought upon thought--and in all I see Divinely ingenious methods for restoring the expelled to their lost inheritance. Certain minds are best reached by the Truth of God as it is re-written and cast into another mold by godly men. There are some who believe on Jesus not so much by His Word as by that of His disciples. "Neither pray I for them alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me through their word." The value of religious books and tracts cannot be calculated. The modes of expression of some men are, I doubt not, fashioned by the Lord with a view to certain characters which by no other means could be reached. Bunyan may bless where Baxter fails. Angel James may win the attention where Doddridge is not successful. Cowper may attract where John Newton is disregarded. Even a text may miss where thoughts derived from it may strike and stick. The experience of the writer and his modes of thought are often manifestly adapted for his reader, and there God's devising is again seen.

But it is not only through the direct teaching of Scripture that the Lord brings His banished to Himself. He has called very many by the

casual remarks of earnest Christians, casual as from them, but all ordained in the eternal purpose. I wish we were more in the habit of speaking to our unconverted friends about the things that make for their peace. We might often be delighted by hearing of conversions if we were instant in season and out of season. Sowing beside all waters, our harvest would be far more abundant. God often casts us into certain circumstances on purpose to make us use those circumstances to His Glory--but we are not always awake to His design.

Our reaching the station too late for a train. Our being cast into certain society on board a steamboat. Our overtaking a stranger on the road. Our mistaking a path--all such things as these which happen every day may be only indicators in God's Providence of some work that we have to do for Him. A Christian minister was one day sent for to visit a dying man, and when he reached the bedside he was gratified by hearing the dying man say, "Sir, I thought I should like to speak with you before I went to Heaven. I thank God I have a good hope through Grace, for I rest on Christ Jesus, and I wish to tell you that you were the means of my conversion."

"How so?" said the minister, "Did you attend my ministry, I do not remember to have seen you?" "No, Sir, I was a hearer elsewhere, but one night I met you in the streets of a certain town, and I asked you whether I was going the right way to a certain terrace, and you told me I was going away from it, and had better take the next turning." And then you said, "I hope you are equally earnest to find the right way to Heaven!" I had never thought of Divine Truth, Sir, until that evening." Now, that is a thing any of us might have said, and ought to have said under such circumstances, but did we say it?

Let seed unsown be this day steeped in tears of deep regret. The old Covenanters used to tell with joy the story of Mr. Guthrie, who lost

his way one night on a moor. His companions went on, and he missed them. When he, at last, rejoined them, having found the way, he showed them that it was a blessed piece of Providence. Said he, "I wandered across the moor till I came to a little cottage where was a sick and dying woman. The priest was just administering to her extreme unction, and when he went out I went in. She was troubled in mind. I told her the Gospel, and she believed in Jesus. I found her in a state of nature, I preached the Gospel to her until I saw her in a state of Grace! And when I came away I left her in a state of Glory!"

Yes, God will make us miss our way that souls may find theirs. He will put us into positions where we may find out His banished ones. He will bring them into contact with His earnest people in ways which will conduce to the saving result. Let us be on the lookout. He who observes his opportunities will find them plentifully given him. God devises for us, and we have but to follow the trail of Providence.

But I must hasten on. Many are brought to repentance and faith by sickness. They have been frivolous in health, but the chamber of affliction has given them time and reasons for meditation. Losses, disappointments, poverty, and all sorts of so-called misfortunes, have worked for the same end. The deaths of others, too--oh, what loud calls have these been-- and how frequently have ears been opened to them! In this great city the deaths of little babes are among Heaven's most important missionary operations. The many who are born only to die--are these wasted lives? Oh, no! Mothers are beckoned to the skies by their departing infants, and fathers, though they may be steeped in indifference to the Gospel, are made to think seriously of the world to come.

You infant cherubs, who in Heaven behold the face of our great Father, how often are you ministers of his that do His pleasure! In this sense,

out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength. Accidents, storms, fires, wrecks, famines, wars, fevers, plagues, earthquakes, and I know not what beside have all alarmed sinners and driven them to God. Omnipotence finds servants everywhere. Grace is never short of devices. The Lord is wonderful in counsel, fertile in means. The stones of the field and the stars of Heaven are alike in league with Him. The armory of the Gospel is never destitute of suitable weapons! The artillery of Heaven strikes at all ranges, and is never short of ammunition.

In addition to this, one ought to remember that there is going on in these happy times a great work of bringing in the banished in the matter of the early education of the young. It were impossible to overestimate the sacred influences which operate in our Sunday schools and in the homes where godly parents preside. Men cannot quite forget the teachings of a holy fireside. They may somewhat, but not utterly. The seed may lie buried long in dust, but the day will come when under ordained circumstances the hidden life will germinate. A verse of an old familiar hymn may lead the man of eighty to the Savior, though he learned it when a child.

The holy text, which like bread was cast on the waters, shall be found again after many days. I believe in the Holy Spirit, and in His sacred care for Divine Truth. He will not suffer the Word of God to fail. His holy influence, like the rain and the snow, shall not return void to Heaven. It shall water the earth, and make it to bring forth and bud.

It is ours to continue blessing youth with holy and godly instruction, and God will crown our efforts to the bringing of His banished ones to Himself.

So, too, with Christian influence. Holy living perfumes the air with Divine Grace. They who serve God in their spheres as servants or

masters, as rich or poor, are spreading holy health around them. We are told by chemists of an essence called ozone, which is given off by certain substances, and has in it the most purifying properties. Believers who are full of Grace may be said to give off a sacred ozone in their lives. Not only when we speak, but as we live, if our conversation is ordered aright, our influence is healthful. Our prayers bring down unnumbered blessings, and our consecrated lives become the channels of their communication to the sons of men.

Nor is this all. I believe God not only uses good things, but even evil things, to bring His banished home. Satan sometimes outshoots himself. Goliath has been slain by his own sword. I have seen self-righteous men, callous to the appeals of the Gospel, at last fall into gross sin. And then they have recoiled from themselves, have shuddered at the depravity they have discovered in their hearts. And by the sight of the sin of which they did not before believe themselves to have been capable, they have been driven to the Savior. Sin may thus, through God's Grace, undermine its own dominion.

And so with error. It is a grand thing when error works out its own absurdity, and discovers its own nakedness. I look with great thankfulness to God upon the condition of the Roman Catholic Church now. That infallibility dogma I believe will be, under God, the means of bringing some of His banished ones to see the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Many credulous but intensely sincere persons could go long and far, and scarcely know where they were, thinking that their deadly error was the Truth of God--but this last stage in the blind man's progress has proved too much for them.

The new dogma is too manifest a lie! It smells too strongly of the bottomless pit, and many, I trust, will start back from it. I have conversed but lately with one upon whom it has had that effect--a

thorough believer in all the doctrines of the Church of Rome until it came to that, [infallibility of the pope], and now he sees his ground cut from under him, and I hope very speedily to baptize him as a Believer in Christ Jesus! Though otherwise he would have been a priest to preach falsehood, he will now, I trust, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

You do not know, you cannot tell, what will happen. In the world of mind there are revolutions of the most marvelous kind. The God of miracles has not ceased to do great marvels. It is ours to work and wait, and we shall surely see the salvation of God. Where God is in the field of battle, His infallible strategy turns everything to account against the powers of evil. He can not only unmask His own batteries, which as yet we know not of, but He can take the guns of His enemies and turn them upon themselves. When Truth seems defeated, she is nearest her victory. God is never mistaken. The Lord of Hosts knows nothing of difficulties. He has devised means to bring His banished ones back to Himself, and He will make those means available to His honor and Glory. Songs eternal shall celebrate the wisdom of God which achieved His purposes of love.

II. Secondly, and I am sorry it will be so briefly, OUR SECONDARY BANISHMENTS. Alas, the people of God sometimes fall into sin. They grow careless, and they walk at a distance from their best Friend, and then sin prevails against them. But the Lord has provided means for bringing them back from their wandering. "He restores my soul." The Holy Spirit, though grieved, will return, convict His servants, again, of sin, and lead them with weeping and supplication to their Savior. He will turn again the captivity of His people, and heal their backslidings.

"Return, you backsliding Ephraim," will yet be heard, and the wanderer will yet say, "Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation."

Think of David for a moment. He had mournfully gone aside, and was banished from all consciousness of Divine favor. But the Lord sent His servant Nathan to find him. There could not have been a fitter parable than Nathan told him, and, "You are the man," was just the right word to fix the application. His child also died, and this deepened what Nathan had spoken. The king was led to weep and lament before God as he saw chastisement coming to his house. And though he had sinned grievously, yet he was brought back with tears of repentance to his God. The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away, therefore He devises means that His banished are not expelled from Him. Take the case of Samson. What an unhappy fall was his! Nothing could have saved him from his degrading lust but his failing strength, and his doleful captivity. The putting out of his eyes, the making him to grind at the mill, the fetters and the prison were all a part of God's means to bring His banished back again. In his shame and degradation Samson had room to see his sin, though he was blind. And in his misery he was made to feel the bitterness of guilt, and to return unto his God. Take another case and a fuller one, that of Peter. Peter denied his Lord. Was it not remarkable that just then the cock should crow? That was part of the heavenly device.

God uses very little things, and works out His designs by them. Even a cock's crowing can break a backslider's heart if the Lord pleases. And then just as the cock crew a second and a third time, the Savior turned and looked on Peter, and that blessed look of mingled love and rebuke did the work of conviction most thoroughly, for he went out and wept bitterly. Then when Peter was ripe for consolation. The Lord had provided a tender heart to cheer him--for there was John--that dear John so full of love, and we find him with Peter as a companion. Who knows how greatly that companionship helped to put the wanderer right?

Then to crown all, the Master when He addressed the women, said, "Go tell My disciples and Peter." That special word for Peter completed the heavenly cure. All these were parts of the plan by which Peter was restored and converted from his sin to become again a joyful servant of his blessed Lord. Let us keep away from sin. But if we have fallen into it, let us not despair, for the Lord has devised means that His banished are not expelled from Him.

There is another kind of banishment which is produced not so much by sin primarily as by despondency. There are some true souls whom God loves, who yet do not often enjoy a sunshiny day. They are very dark as to their hope and their joy, and some of them have perhaps, for months, lost the light of God's countenance. In their complaining moments they are tempted to say, "Lo, these many years do I serve You, and yet You never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." Yet, what promises there are for them! The ingenuity of God has revealed itself remarkably in the wording of His promises to suit the conditions of His poor tempest-tossed and downcast people--

"What more can He say than to you He has said, You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

How graciously our heavenly Father sends to His afflicted words of good cheer by persons who have passed through similar experiences, and can therefore sympathize with them. If it seems better in His sight He ministers comfort by those of an opposite temperament, whose cheerful way of talking of Jesus chides the disconsolate out of their despair. Giant Despair may get the child of God in the dungeon, and lock the door as fast as he pleases, and nail up the windows, and put iron bars before them--but the Lord knows how to get His children out of the prison after all. The Giant may say, "I shall make an end of them. I have bones in my castle yard of others I have slain, and I will have

theirs, also. I will persuade them to use the knife or halter, and get them to put an end to themselves."

But he does not know that God has hidden in the Christian's bosom the key called "Promise," and at last the key shall open the door, and out of Doubting Castle the prisoners shall come, escaping like birds out of the snare of the fowler. I believe the histories of some desponding ones would surprise us could we know them. I have never been able to doubt that almost-miracle related of Mrs. Honeywood by many of the Puritan divines, men of undoubted truthfulness. After many years of despair, she took up a Venice glass, and dashing it to the ground, cried, " It is of no use comforting me, for I am damned as surely as this glass is broken."

To the amazement of all, it was not broken. And though nothing had cheered her for years, she was, if I may so say, confounded into hope. Oh, the stories that desponding souls might tell--of how God has appeared to them at last! Let us be cheered by remembering the Lord's wonders of old, for He is the same still. The smoking flax shall yet burst into a joyous flame. The third day He will raise you up, and you shall live in His sight. Israel shall come out of Egypt--with a high hand and an outstretched arm will Jehovah deliver His afflicted. Only look up, quietly wait, and turn your eyes to Calvary's bleeding Savior, and you shall yet find light arise in darkness. The Lord will not leave even the least of His people to perish in despair. His wisdom fails not, nor His love. He shall break the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder, and His chosen shall come forth from the house ofbondage.

III. I have thus, as best I could, set forth the abounding goodness of the Great God our Savior, but now there is A PRACTICAL LESSON to be gathered from all this, and I want you to learn it. If God thus brings

back His banished, let us bring back ours.

The first application of that rule is this--there may, perhaps, out of so many hundreds of persons here, be some-one--a father, a mother, or some other relative, who has been compelled, as he has thought, to deny and no longer to acknowledge a child or a brother. Great offenses have at last brought anger into your bosom, and, as you think, very justifiable anger. I shall not argue the point. I will however say this, God has devised means of bringing back His banished--could not you devise some means to bring back yours?

Oh, could not the lad be tried again? Could not the daughter have another opportunity? Did you tell your brother never to darken your house? Let tomorrow's post bear him an invitation to come and see you again. Do you expect God to forgive you if you forgive not others? Do you think that He to whom you owe ten thousand talents, will excuse you the debt if you take your debtor by the throat who only owes you a hundred pence? Oh, celebrate this day by a full forgiveness of all who have done anything against you! And do not merely say, "Well, I will do it if they will ask me."

That is not what God does, He is first in the matter, and devises means. Try. Consider. Devise means. "Would you have me lower myself?" My dear Friend, sometimes to lower ourselves is to make ourselves much higher in God's sight.

There is such a thing as bowing down to rise, stooping to conquer. He who is first to put an end to strife is the most honorable of the two. Anything is better than harboring wrath and being revengeful or bitter of spirit. I will say no more, only God grant you may put it in practice if you are in the position described.

The last application of the lesson shall be this--let every Christian devise means for bringing to Jesus those banished ones who surround

him. We must, as a Christian Church, be indefatigably industrious in seeking out the Lord's expelled and banished ones who live in our neighborhood. I felt much joy of heart this week, in Liverpool, where I preached to an assembly of fallen women, for I felt as I spoke that the words dropped upon soil made ready to receive it. I hope it was so.

O dear Christian people, if you know of any whom the world casts out, be diligent to bring them in! If society says to them, "We do not know you, you are like lepers and must be set apart," go after them, go after them among the first. The most sick require the physician first. The most fallen most need help. If you feel that you can do the work, I pray you will give yourself to it with diligence. There is a vast amount of ignorance as well as sin in this city and in all our large towns. I know it is hard to labor among the very ignorant and degraded, but it is to these we ought to go first.

Keep up your Ragged schools. Young men and young women who have a call to such work, persevere in this holy service. You will meet with many difficulties and little apparent success--never mind--you must devise means to bring these banished ones back! Push on with your work. God will bless you. Might not more be done by some of you, by having classes at your houses, classes of young men and young women, or boys and girls? We have not always enough rooms for such purposes, and to build them costs money--are there not many of you who might use your parlors in that way on the Sunday, and do much good at no cost? That may be your means of bringing back God's banished ones.

Or perhaps you have a larger room, and might get up a weekly Prayer Meeting, or hold a little service. There are very many who will never enter our Churches and Chapels who would enter cottages and private houses, if invited. We cannot multiply services too much in this great city. It may not be so in small villages, but here we have awful need

and are literally sweltering in sin and ignorance. Devise means for bringing the banished ones back. Think of something suitable for your abilities, and get about it. Is this plan inapplicable? Try another. Cannot you distribute tracts? Could you not write letters to your associates and friends about their souls? How often are those letters blessed! Wisely written and much prayed over, I do not know of a better means for fishing for souls than godly letters. Try the plan.

God devised means to save you. In His hands begin to devise means for saving others. Science and art have their fertile inventors, and shall we fail for lack of a little sanctified common sense? O for planners and plotters who will lay out all their ingenuity in plans for soul-winning. I thank God that there are so many of you doing good, but I would that all of you were. I would that everyone here felt, "I must, while the day lasts, work for my Lord. The night is coming on." I will say thus much--if there is one person here who cannot be excused from working, and does not wish to be, it is the preacher, for oh, I owe my Lord so much! I had so much sin to be forgiven, and it has been forgiven. And I have received so much mercy at His hands, that I would ask, as long as I live, to be devising means for bringing others to my precious Redeemer.

Now, if He has not shown such love to you, you shall be excused. But I know many of you will cry out, "The preacher says he owes much, but we owe quite as much. We are equally in debt to the infinite mercy of God." Then I charge you in the name of Him who was crucified for you! By His precious blood and wounds! By His everlasting love, and by His coming to receive you to Himself, I charge you--"Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Amen.

Chapter 43

The Unrivalled Eloquence Of Jesus

(No. 951)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The officers answered, Never man spoke like this Man." John 7:46.

THE chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to lay hold upon the Savior lest His preaching should altogether overthrow their power. While the constables who had mingled with the throng were waiting for an opportunity of arresting the Lord Jesus, they themselves were arrested by His earnest eloquence. They could not take Him, for He had fairly taken them, and when they came back without a prisoner, they gave their reason for not having captured Him in these memorable words, "Never man spoke like this Man."

Two or three remarks as a preface to our discourse. It is a sure sign of a falling Church when its leaders call in the aid of the secular arm. The rule of the Scribes and Pharisees must have been weakness, itself, when it needed to wield the truncheon of the civil magistrate as its only sufficient argument against its antagonist. That Church which has been supported by bayonets, is in all probability, not far off its demise. Any Church which long collects its tithes and its offerings by the hand of the police, and by legal process and distraint, is also, depend upon it, none too strong.

The Church which is unable to maintain itself by spiritual power is dying, if not dead. Whenever we think of calling in an arm of flesh to defend the faith, we may very seriously question whether we have not made a mistake, and whether that which can be supported by the sword

must not greatly differ from the Savior's kingdom, of which He said, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight."

The more a man leans on a big staff the more sure are you that he is feeble. In proportion as Churches rely on Acts of Parliament, human prestige, and legal authority--in that very degree they show their weakness. Call in the sheriffs officer, and you have virtually called in the gravedigger! In this respect it is peculiarly true, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." A Church is buried by the State, and not supported, when it draws its sustenance from forced tithes and legalized exactions.

Observe, next, that in the end the spiritual power will always baffle the temporal. The officers are fully armed and quite able to complete the arrest of the Preacher. He has no weapons with which to oppose them. He stands unarmed amid the throng--probably none of His disciples would lift a finger to defend Him--or if they did, He would bid them put up their sword into its sheath. And yet the officers cannot seize the non-resistant Preacher. What stays their hands? It has come to a combat between body and mind, and mind prevails.

The eloquent tongue is matched against the two-edged sword, and it has won the day. No fears or qualms of conscience hampered the constables and yet they could not lay their hands on Him. They were chained to the spot where they stood--spellbound by the mystic power of His speech. His very tones fascinated them! The discourse which He poured forth so fluently held them fast as His willing captives. It has always been so--the spiritual has conquered the physical. Though at first it seemed an unequal conflict, yet in the long run the elder has served the younger.

The club of Cain may lay Abel level with the dust, but it does not silence him--from the ground the blood of Abel continues still to cry.

Martyrs may be consigned to prison, and dragged from prison to the stake--so that to all appearance a full end is made of the good men--but "even in their ashes live their wonted fires." At the stake they find a platform with a boundless auditory, and from the grave their teaching cries with louder voice than from the pulpit.

Like seeds sown in the earth they spring up and multiply themselves. Others arise to bear the same witness, and if need be to seal it in the same fashion. As Pharaoh's mighty hosts could not combat with the hail and the lightning which plagued the fields of Zoan, and as all their chivalry could not put to flight the darkness that might be felt, even so when God sends His Truth with power upon a land, battleaxe and buckler are vain in the opposers' hands. Our appointed weapons of attack are not carnal, neither can they be withstood by shield or armor. Our bowstrings cannot be broken, or

the edge of our sword blunted. Let but the Lord furnish His ministers, as he did at Pentecost, with wondrous Words instead of shields, and spears, and swords--and these weapons of the holy war will prove themselves to be irresistible.

Fight on, O Preacher! Tell forth the story of the Cross! Defy opposition and laugh persecution to scorn, for, like your Master, you shall, as His servant, ascend above all your enemies, lead your captivity captive, and scatter good gifts among the sons of men! Note again that God can get testimonies to the majesty of His Son from the most unlikely places. I do not know who these constables may have been, or from what class of men they were drawn, but generally the civil authorities do not employ the most refined and intellectual persons to act as officers.

They do not require much tenderness of spirit for such work--a rough hand, a keen eye and a bold spirit are the principal requisites for a

constable. The priests and Pharisees would naturally select for the seizing of the great Teacher those who were least likely to be affected by His teaching. And yet these men--doubtless men of brutal habits, men ready enough to do their masters' bidding--showed within themselves sufficient mental capacity to feel the power of the matchless oratory of Jesus Christ.

Those who were sent as enemies came back to rehearse His praises, and so to vex His adversaries. Truly the Lord can make the stones to cry out of a wall, and the beam out of the timber to answer it if He wills. He can transform the ready instruments of opposition into the willing advocates of His righteous cause. Not only as in the case of Saul of Tarsus can He direct a high character into the right path, but He can uplift the groveling and put a testimony into their mouths. He makes the wrath of men to praise Him.

He compels His adversaries to do Him homage. Keep good heart, then, O you soldiers of the Cross! Let no thought of discouragement ever flit across your spirits. Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us. He can and will glorify His Son Jesus. Even the devils shall acknowledge His almighty power. His Word has gone forth and His Oath has confirmed it--"Surely as I live, says the Lord, all flesh shall see the salvation of God." God will glorify Himself even by the tongues of His enemies! In this hope let us set up our banners.

The text introduces to our notice the eloquence of our Lord Jesus Christ and upon that topic we shall try to speak. May the Holy Spirit enable us. We shall note first the peculiar qualities of it, which amply justified the praise of the constables. Secondly, personal recollections of it, treasured up by ourselves. And, thirdly, prophetic anticipations of the time when our souls shall hear His voice yet more distinctly, and shall say again, "Never man spoke like this Man."

I. Let us note the PECULIAR QUALITIES of our Lord's eloquence. As among kings He is the King of kings. As among priests He is the great High Priest. As among Prophets He is the Messiah. And so is He the Prince of preachers, the Apostle of our profession. They who are most excellent as preachers are those who are most like He. But even those who by being most like He have become eminent, they are still far short of His excellence. "His lips," says the spouse, "are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh." He is a Prophet mighty in word and deed.

To form a right conception of our Lord's ministry it is necessary to note the whole of it, and we may do so without departing from the text. For though the officers did not hear all that Jesus said, I have no doubt that the qualities which shone in His entire ministry were, many of them, apparent in the discourse which He delivered on that particular occasion. Follow me, therefore, as I note the leading qualities of His unrivalled eloquence.

The most casual reader of Christ's discourses would observe that their style is singularly clear and easy to understand. And yet their matter is by no means trivial or superficial. Did ever man speak like this Man, Christ Jesus, for simplicity? Little children gathered around Him, for much of what He said was interesting, even to them. If there was ever a difficult word in any of Christ's discourses, it is because it must be there owing to the faultiness of human language. But there is never a hard word inserted for its own sake, where an easier word could have been employed.

You never find Him, for the sake of display, speeding upon the wings of rhetoric. He never gives forth dark sayings that His hearers may discover that His learning is vast and His thinking profound. He is profound, and in that respect, "never man spoke like this Man." He unveils the mysteries of God. He brings to light the treasures of

darkness of the ages past which Prophets and kings desired to see, but into which they could not pry.

There is, in His teaching, a depth so vast that the greatest human intellect cannot fathom it. And all the while He speaks like the "holy child Jesus"--in short sentences, with plain words. He speaks in parables with many illustrations of the most homely kind--about eggs, and fish, and candles, and bushels, and sweeping houses, and losing pieces of money,

and finding sheep. He never paraded the stale and mildewed metaphors of your mere rhetoricians--"rippling rills, verdant meads, star-bespangled heavens," and I know not what besides.

The hackneyed properties of theatrical orations are not for Him--His speech abounds in the true and most natural of images, and is ever constructed not to display Himself, but to make clear the Truth which He was sent to reveal. "Never man spoke like this Man!" The common people with their common sense heard Him gladly, for even if they could not always grasp the full compass of His teaching, yet upon the surface of His plain speech there glittered lumps of golden ore well worthy to be treasured up.

For this quality our Savior, then, remains unrivalled, easily understood, yet profound. His speech had this also about it--He spoke with unusual authority. He was a master dogmatist. It was not, "it may be so," or, "it can be proven," or, "it is highly probable." No, it was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." And yet, side by side with this was an extraordinary degree of humility. The Master spoke dogmatically, but never with proud self-sufficiency, after the manner of the children of conceit. He never pestered you with assumptions of superiority, and claims to official dignity.

He borrowed no assistance from a priestly robe, or from an imposing

title. Meek He was as Moses, but like Moses He spoke the Words of the Lord with absolute authority. Lowly and gentle of heart, never extolling Himself, nor bearing witness of Himself, for then, as He says, His witness would not be true. He was nevertheless the unhesitating minister of righteousness, speaking with power, because the Lord's Spirit had anointed Him.

Coming out of the ivory palaces, fresh from the bosom of His Father--having looked into the unseen and heard the infallible oracle--He spoke not with bated breath, with hesitancy and debate as the scribes and lawyers. He spoke not with arguments and reasonings as the priests and Pharisees, creating perplexity and pouring darkness upon human minds. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," were His favorite Words. He spoke that He did know, and testified what He had seen, and demanded to be accepted as sent forth from the Father.

He did not debate, but declare. His sermons were not guesses, but testimonies. Yet He never magnifies Himself, He lets His works and His Father bear witness of Him. He asserts Truth from His own positive knowledge, and because He has a commission from the Father to do so--but never as mere dogmatists do with an extolling of their own selves, as though they were to be glorified and not the God who sent the Truth and the Spirit by whom it is applied.

Further, in our Lord's preaching there was a wonderful combination of faithfulness with tenderness. He was, indeed, the Prince of faithful preachers. Not even Nathan, when He stood before King David, and said, "You are the man," could be more true to human conscience than Christ was. How those cutting words of His must have told, like rifle bullets when they were first hurled against the respectability of the age, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Woe unto you, lawyers," and so forth.

There was no mincing matters, no winking at wickedness because it happened to be associated with greatness, no excusing sin because it put on the sanctimoniousness of religion. He neither fawned on the great, nor pandered to the populace. Jesus reproved all classes to their faces concerning their sins. It never occurred to Him to seek to please men. He looked to the doing of His Father's business, and since that business often involved the laying of righteousness to the line, of judgment to the plummet, He spared not to do it.

Perhaps no preacher ever used more terrible words with regard to the fate of the ungodly than our Lord has done. You shall ransack even medieval records to find more fearfully suggestive descriptions of the torments of Hell. Those awful sentences which fell from the lips of the Friend of Sinners prove that He was too much their Friend to flatter them. Too much their Friend to let them perish without a full warning of their doom. And yet, though He thundered like His own chosen Boanerges, what a Barnabas the Savior was!

What a Son of Consolation! How gentle were His Words! He did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. For the woman taken in adultery He had no word of curse. For the mothers of Jerusalem bringing their babes He had not a syllable of reprehension. Kind, gentle, tender, loving--the speech which at one time sounded as the voice of Jehovah which breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and makes the hinds to calve--was at other seasons modulated to music, softened to a whisper, and used to cheer the disconsolate and bind up broken hearts. "Never man spoke like this Man," so faithful and yet so tenderly affectionate, so mindful of the least good which He could see in man, and yet so determined to smite hypocrisy wherever His holy eyes could discover it.

You will observe in the Savior's preaching a remarkable mingling of zeal with prudence. He is full of ardor, the zeal of God's House has

eaten Him up. He never preached a cold, dull sermon in all His life. He was a pillar of light and fire. When He spoke, His Words burned their way into men's minds by reason of the Sacred enthusiasm with which He delivered them! And yet His fervor never degenerated into wildfire like the zeal of ignorant and over-balanced minds. We know some whose zeal, if tempered with knowledge, might be of use to the Church--but being altogether without knowledge--it is dangerous both to themselves and to their cause.

Fanaticism may spring out of a real desire for God's Glory. There is, however, no need that earnestness should degenerate into rant. It never did so in the Savior's case. His zeal was red hot, but His prudence was calm and cool. He was not afraid of the Herodians, but yet how quietly did He answer them in that trap concerning tribute-money! They would never forget the penny and the question, "Whose image and superscription is this?" He was ready to meet the Sadducees at any time, but He was on His guard, so that they could not entangle Him in His speech. He was quite sure to escape their nets, and take them in their own craftiness.

If a question is asked, which for the moment He does not care to answer, He knows how to ask them another question which they, also, cannot answer--and send them about their business covered with shame. It is a grand thing when a man can be warm and wise--when he can carry about him an unexcitable temperament, and yet the force which excites others--unmoved himself, the man of prudence becomes the power by which others are moved. Such was the Savior.

But I must not let that sentence of mine pass unchallenged--in the higher sense He was always more moved than the people--but I mean as to temper and spirit He was not readily disturbed. He was self-possessed, prudent, wise, and yet when He spoke He flashed, and burned, and blazed

with a sacred vehemence which showed that His whole soul was on fire with love to the souls of men. Zeal and prudence in remarkable proportions met in Jesus, and, "Never man spoke like this Man."

So, too, everyone who has read our Lord's discourses and marked His character will have perceived that love was among the leading characteristics of His style as a Preacher. He was full of tenderness, brimming with sympathy, overflowing with affection. That weeping over Jerusalem, whose children He would have gathered, was but one instance of what happened many a time in His life. His heart sympathized with sorrow whenever His eyes beheld it. He could not bear that the people should be like sheep without a shepherd, and He worked many deeds of kindness, and said many words of instruction, because He loved them.

But our Savior's speech was never affected and canting. He used no stale honey, there was nothing of that--I do not know the word to use--that insincere sweetness, which in some people is disgustingly perceptible. He was far removed from the effeminacy which, in too many cases, passes for Christian love. I loathe in my very soul the talk of those who call everybody, "dear" this, or "dear" that, endearing those whom, perhaps, they never knew, and to whom they would not give a sixpence if they wanted it. I hate this sugar of lead, this spiritual billing and cooing.

Where there is the least of the meat of true charity, we find most of the parsley or the fennel which are used for garnishing. The bottle is empty and so they label it to make it pass for full. No, give me a man, give me a man! Let me hear outspoken speech, not effeminate canting, whining, and pretended ecstasies of affection. In nine cases out of ten the biggest bigot in the world is the man who preaches up liberality--and the man who can hate you worst is he who addresses you in softest phrases.

No, let a man love me, but let it be with the love of a man. Let no man cast aside that which is masculine, forcible, and dignified under the notion that he is making himself better by becoming soft and babyish. It was never so with the Savior. He condemned this or that evil in no measured terms. There was in Him no apologizing, no guarding of expressions, no fawning, no using of soft words. They who are shaken with the wind and affect flattering phrases stand in kings' palaces. But He, the people's Preacher, One chosen out of the people, dwelt among the many, a Man among men.

He was manly all through. Love in Him abounded, love unsurpassed, but also manliness of the noble sort. Far above the petty arts of professional orators, and the shallow arguments of thinkers, His teaching dealt out Truth with courageous fidelity and generous affection. He held His own position, but trampled on none. He committed Himself to no man, but He was willing to bless every man. His love was no imitation, but a solid ingot of the gold of Ophir. No one else in this matter has so exactly struck the balance, and therefore, "Never man spoke like this Man."

One memorable Characteristic of our Lord's preaching was His remarkable commingling of the excellences which are found separately in His servants. You know, perhaps, a preacher who is admirable when he addresses the mind. He can explain and expound very logically and clearly--and you feel that you have been instructed whenever you have sat under him. But the light, though clear, is cold like moonlight--and when you retire, you feel that you know more--but yet are none the better for what you know.

It were well if those who can enlighten the head so well would remember that man has also a heart. On the other hand we know others whose whole ministry is addressed to the passions and the emotions. During a sermon

you shed any quantity of tears, you pass through a furnace of sensation--but as to what is left which is calculated permanently to benefit you--it is difficult to discover. When the sermon is over, the shower and the sunshine have both departed, the fair rainbow has disappeared from sight, and what remains? It were well if those who always talk to the heart remembered that men have heads as well.

Now the Savior was a Preacher whose head was in His heart, and whose heart was in His head. He never addressed the emotions except by motives which commended themselves to the reason. Nor did He instruct the mind without at the same time influencing the heart and conscience.

Our Savior's power as a speaker was comprehensive. He aroused the con-science--who more than He? With but a single sentence He convicted those who came to tempt Him, so that beginning with the eldest, and ending with the youngest, they all went out ashamed.

But He was not a mere render open of wounds--a cutter and a killer. He was equally great in the art of holy consolation. With intonations of matchless music He could say, "Go your way. Your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." He knew how to console a weeping friend as well as to confront a boisterous enemy. His superiority was felt by all sorts of men. His artillery struck at all ranges--His mind was equal to all emergencies. It was for good, like the sword of the cherubim at the gates of Eden for evil. It turned every way to keep the gates of Life open for those who would gladly enter there.

My Brethren, I have entered upon a theme which is boundless. I merely touch some of the outer skirts of my Master's robes. As for Himself, if you would know how He spoke you must hear Him. One of the ancients was likely to say that he could have wished to have seen Rome in all its splendor, to have been with Paul in all his labors, and to have heard Christ when preaching. Surely it were worth worlds but once to have

caught the round of that serene, soul-stirring voice--to have beheld for once the glance of those matchless eyes as they looked through the heart--and that heavenly Countenance as it glowed with love!

His eloquence had, however, this, for its main aspect--that it concerned the greatest truths that were ever made manifest to man. He brought light and immortality to light. He cleared up what had been doubtful. He resolved that which had been mysterious. He declared that which is gracious, that which saves the soul and glorifies God. No preacher was ever laden with so Divine a message as Christ. We who bring the same glad tidings bring the news as second hand, and but in part. He came forth from the Father's bosom with the whole Truth, and, therefore, "Never man spoke like this Man."

II. Secondly, let us try to awaken in the saints Some PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS of the Savior's eloquence. Lend me your memories, you people of God. Do you remember when you first heard Him speak? We shall not talk of words which cleave the air, but of those spirit-words which thrill the heart and move the soul. Follow me, then, and recall to fondest memory His Words of pity, of which I may truly say, "Never man spoke to me like this Man."

It was in the dim dawning of my spiritual life, before it was yet light, before the sun had fully risen. I felt my sin, I grieved beneath its weight. I despaired, I was ready to perish. And then He came to me. Well do I remember accents which then I scarcely could understand, which nevertheless cheered my spirit. They sounded like these, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Soft and sweet were the tones, and tremulous with fond anxiety. They came as from One who had bled and died. Do you remember when you also heard them? I do not mean when you heard them from the pulpit, from the

minister--but in your heart--from Gethsemane, the Cross, and the Throne. It was sweet to know that Jesus pitied you. You were not saved, and you were afraid that you never might be, for the sea worked and was tempestuous, but He said, "It is I, be not afraid." You began to perceive that there was mercy if you could get it--that one tender heart felt for you--one strong arm was ready to help you. You could no longer lament, "No man cares for my soul," for you perceived that there was a

Savior, and a great one. Those were sweet sounds that now and then were heard above the tumultuous deep which called unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts. None else ever spoke as He did.

Do you remember how in those days you heard His voice with words of persuasion? You had often heard Gospel invitations as the call of man, but then they came to you as the voice of God heard in the silence of your heart, saying, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Do you remember how they followed one another, each word suiting your particular condition and having still accumulated power over your mind?

Did not Jesus often seem to say to you, "Yield now, poor Sinner, cast away your weapons of rebellion. Destroy not your own soul! Look unto Me and be saved. For I have loved you and made atonement for your sins"? Those were marvelous pleadings which at last won your heart by force of love. You had much ado to resist those persuasions, and you did resist them for awhile. And like the spouse in the Canticle, you permitted the lover of your soul to wait outside your door, and say, "Open to Me, My head is wet with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night." Yet you found it hard to resist Him, for the persuasions of His love were

mighty upon you as He drew you with cords of love, with bands of a Man, until you could hold out no longer.

Beloved, you surely call to mind when the words of persuasion were by-and-by followed with words of power! "Never man spoke like this Man," when He said to my darkened soul, "let there be light." Well do I remember that admonition, "Arise, shine, for your light is come. Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." Do you remember when He passed by and saw you in your blood, and said to you, "Live," and cast the skirts of covenant love over you, and washed you, and made you clean, and laid you in His bosom, and made you His forever? "Never man spoke like this Man."

Do you remember when He made all your darkness and sorrow to pass away as in a moment by saying to you, "I am your salvation"? Have you forgotten that word of pardon? I can never forget it--even if I outlive Methuselah, it must still remain green in my memory! The words came with power when I looked to the Cross, and heard the absolving words, "Your sins are forgiven you." "Never man spoke like this Man."

No priest can give an awakened conscience rest, nor any other, except the great High Priest, Jesus, Melchisedek, the sinner's Pardoner. No words of hope, nor thoughts of consolation can ever breed such peace within the spirit as the blood of Jesus brings when it speaks within the heart far better things than that of Abel. It reconciles us unto our God and so gives perfect peace.

Since the time when first we heard His pardoning voice, we, many a time, have heard Him speaking with right royal words, and we have said, "Never man spoke like this Man." How sweet it has been to sit in the assembly of the saints when the Gospel has been, indeed, His Word to our souls! Oh, the marrow and the fatness, the feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow which we have fed upon when the King has sat

at the table! When our Beloved speaks His Word of promise, how has it revived our drooping spirit! It came as dew upon the tender herb. It touched our lips as a coal from off the altar. It gave us healing, consolation, joy.

Beloved, cannot you look back to many instances when you had no food for your soul but the promise--when your soul knew no music but the word of His love? Blest Master, speak to me thus evermore--

"Each moment draw from earth away
My heart, that lowly waits Your call.
Speak to my inmost soul, and say,
'I am your Love, your God, your All!'
To feel Your power, to hear Your voice,
To taste Your love, is all my choice." And when you have enjoyed His Presence in your solitude, have had communion with Him, and He has revealed His ancient, His unchanging, His never-ending, His boundless love to you--have you not prized His Words far above the choicest joys of earth?

When you have confessed your sins with penitent sorrow and He has given back the word of full remission. When you have revealed your sorrow and received the assurance of His tender sympathy. When you have laid bare your weakness and received the word that strengthens--have you not been ready to challenge all Heaven to compare with Him--and exclaimed, "Never man spoke like this Man"? To those who are unbelievers, and to those professors who live at a distance from Christ, this will sound like mere fancy, but believe me, it is not so. If there is anything real beneath the skies, it is the communion which Christ has with His people by His Spirit.

"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Christ." We hear His voice, though not with these ears, and we so hear it as to

know it, as sheep discern their shepherd's voice. And a stranger we will not follow, for we know not the voice of strangers. Our ears being opened by the Spirit, we at this hour can say, "I sleep, but my heart wakes. It is the voice of my Beloved, my soul melts while He speaks."

Now, my dear Friends, there are some words of our Savior spoken long ago, which, since we have known Him have been so quickened by His Presence that we number them from now on among personal recollections. That word, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." It is true it is written in the Bible, an old, old saying--but I can say and so can many of you, that it has been a new saying to me. We have by faith been enabled to hear it as spoken to us, and the Spirit of the blessed God has so brought it home to our hearts that it is as if Christ had never said it before, but had spoken it to us personally. Yes, "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

There are many here who have heard Him say, "I have chosen you and not cast you away." The Spirit of God has made many an ancient saying a speech from the living Jesus to us. Those words of His when He said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God"--our faith has stood at Bethlehem's manger and we have seen the Body prepared for Him, and Himself putting on the form of a servant. His coming to seek and to save that which was lost has become a personal coming to us, and we have rejoiced in it exceedingly.

Has not the voice which came of old from the sea when He said, "It is I, be not afraid," been a voice to you? And the voice from Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered you"--has it never bewailed the perishing ones around you? The voice from Bethany, "I am the resurrection and the life"--has it never been heard at the burial of your brother? The voice from the table when He washed His disciples'

feet--and bade them wash one another's feet--has it not excited you to humble service of the Brethren?

Have we not again and again heard the cry of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as You will"? I cannot convince myself that I did not actually hear the Redeemer say that. At any rate, I have rejoiced when in the spirit of resignation the echo of it has been heard in my own spirit. Do I not this very day hear Him saying, though long ago He spoke it, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"? His intercession for my guilty soul. What is it but the continuance of that gentle prayer? And for certain that last concluding sentence, "It is finished," "Consummatum est"--my ears may not have heard it, but my soul hears it now and rejoices to repeat the words!

Who shall lay anything to my charge since Christ has consummated my deliverance from death, Hell, sin, and brought in a perfect righteousness for me? Yes, these old sayings of Christ heard years ago we have heard in spirit, and our witness is after hearing them all, "Never man spoke like this Man." None can be compared with Him at their best. His ministers cannot rival Him--they do but echo His speech.

III. I shall close by mentioning certain PROPHETIC ANTICIPATIONS which lodge in our souls with regard to that eloquence in the future.

Brethren, you have heard the voice of Jesus, but are you expecting to still hear it? As long as ever you live you are to speak for Jesus--but your hope for His kingdom does not lie in your speech but in His voice. He can speak to the heart, He can make the Truth which you only utter to the ear penetrate to the mind and heart. We expect that our exalted Lord will speak before long with louder voice than before.

The Gospel chariot lags awhile. As yet He goes not forth conquering and to conquer, but He will yet gird His sword upon His thigh and His voice shall be heard marshalling His hosts for the battle. Let but Christ

give the word, and the company of them that shall publish it shall be exceedingly great. Let Him send forth the Word of His might from Zion, and thousands shall be born in a day. Yes, nations shall be born at once!

The elect of God, today apparently but few, shall come out from their hiding places, and Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Despite the melancholy belief of some that the world will come to an end with a defeated God and with only a few saved, I nevertheless am certain that Scripture warrants brighter hopes. One day "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," this we know, for God has said it. In all things Christ shall have the pre-eminence, and therefore in the matter of souls saved He will have the pre-eminence over Satan and the souls who are lost.

for an hour of that voice of the Lord which is full of majesty, that voice which breaks the cedars of Lebanon, and makes them to skip like a calf--Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn! When shall the voice of the Lord shake the wilderness of Kadesh and discover the forests? It shall yet be heard, and in His temple shall everyone speak of His Glory. For the Lord sits upon the flood, yes, the Lord sits King forever. Have hope, then. Let your anticipations be of brighter times, for He will speak--He that shakes both Heaven and earth when He wills it. And when He speaks, you will say, "Never man spoke like this Man."

We expect personally for ourselves, if Jesus comes not before we depart, to hear Him speak sweetly to us in the hour of death. Talk of it solemnly and softly, for put it in whatever light you may, it is dread work to die. But when we lie a dying, and the sounds of earth are shut out from the lone chamber, and the voice of affection is drowned

in mournful sobs, then Jesus will come and make our bed, and speak as never man spoke, saying "Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am your God. When you pass through the rivers I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you." Dying Christians, by the songs which they have lifted up, and by the joy which has sparkled from their eyes have proven that the voice of Jesus is such that, "Never man spoke like this Man."

Beloved, what will that voice be to our disembodied spirits when our souls shall leave this clay and fly through tracks unknown to see the Savior? I know not with what words of welcome He may address us then. He may reserve His choicest utterances for the day of His appearing, but He will not take us into His bosom without a love word, nor receive us into our quiet resting places without a cordial commendation. What must it be to see His face, to hear His voice in Heaven? Then shall we know that, "Never man spoke like this Man."

And then when the time ordained of old is fulfilled, when the day comes that the dead shall hear the voice of God, when the Resurrection and the Life shall speak with trumpet tones, and the righteous shall be raised from their graves-- oh, then it will be seen, as they all obey the quickening word--that "Never man spoke like this Man." He who speaks the resurrection word is man as well as God. "As by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection from the dead." And then, when you and I shall be at His right hand. When the body and soul reunited shall receive the final award, and He shall say in inimitable tones, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world," we shall not need to say, "Never man spoke like this Man."

When we, with Him, shall enter into the everlasting rest, when He shall deliver up the mediatorial kingdom to God, even the Father, and God

shall be All in All, we, in the retrospect of all He said on earth and said in Heaven--we in the constant hearing of His voice who shall wear His priesthood perpetually, looking still like a lamb that has been slain-- we shall then bear fullest witness that, "Never man spoke like this Man."

Mark well, my Hearers, that in such confession every soul of you will have to unite. You may live enemies to Christ, and you may die strangers to Him, but that, "Never man spoke like this Man," you shall be made to feel. If today you will not acknowledge that His mercy to you is unbounded, that His condescension in inviting you to come to Him today is worthy of loving admiration. If you will not yield, but shut your ears to the invitation of His mercy when He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," yet at the last, an unwilling assent to our text will be wrung from you.

When He shall say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels," the thunder of that word shall so torment you, the terror of His speech shall so shake you, and utterly dissolve you, that you shall feel, wondering all the while that it was a Man who could speak thus, that, "Never man spoke like this Man." You have sometimes upbraided the preacher for speaking too severely--you will then know that he was not severe enough.

You have sometimes marvelled that the minister should give such fearful descriptions of the wrath to come--you thought he went too far. But when the pit opens wide her mouth and the devouring flames leap up to devour you at the word of the once crucified Savior, then you will say, for terror and for wrath, for overwhelming horror--"Never man spoke like this Man." The lips that said "Come, you weary," shall say, "Depart, you cursed," in tones which none but such lips could give forth.

Love once made angry turns to wrath, intense and terrible. Oil is soft, but how fiercely it burns! Beware, lest His anger is kindled against you, for it will burn even to the lowest Hell. The Lamb of God is as a lion to those who reject His love. Provoke Him no longer. May the Holy Spirit bow you to repentance. God grant that in a far happier sense than this last, you may learn to say, "Never man spoke like this Man." But one way or other every soul here, and every soul of woman born, shall acknowledge that, "Never man spoke like this Man." To God I commend you. Farewell.

Chapter 44

Negotiations For Peace

(No. 952)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (He is Lord of all)." Acts 10:36.

THESE words were addressed to an admirable congregation, all met with an earnest purpose, all conscious that they were in the Presence of God, all like good soil that had been plowed and prepared for the good seed. Happy preacher to have such a congregation! God make this congregation to be of the same sort. The preacher, also, was a right faithful messenger from Heaven. No sooner did Peter know that he was commissioned to the Gentile centurion and his household, than he came to his house. And when he found himself surrounded by the family and their friends, he girt up his loins for his work and gave his whole soul to his subject. Peter goes straight to his business. There is no beating about the bush, no prefatory apology--he begins to preach. Jesus Christ, spoken of by Prophets, seen by Apostles, hanged on a tree, and risen again on the third day. It is well when the preacher feels that preaching is no mere display, and is not intended to be an opportunity for him to show how excellent an orator he can be. The true ambassador for Christ feels that he himself stands before God, and has to deal with souls in God's place as God's servant. He therefore has no time for considering the graces of oratory and the tricks of rhetoric--but must speak from his inmost soul the Word of the Lord. Every preacher stands in a solemn place--a place in which unfaithfulness is inhumanity to man as well as treason to God. To be

false to our charge will cast us into the deepest condemnation--to be hurled from a pulpit into Hell will be to perish, indeed! See to it, then, that both the congregation and the preacher are peculiarly in God's Presence in their solemn assemblies and feeling and acting accordingly. Pray for us and for yourselves that we both may so behave before the Lord that our assembling together may not increase our sin, but may prove to be a rich and lasting blessing.

We have in the text before us the subject upon which Peter treated in his sermon to Cornelius and his friends. He seems to have taken it for granted that men are at war with God, that even the attentive congregation before him, though consisting of the best of men, were by nature at enmity with their Maker. He speaks, therefore, as an ambassador desirous of establishing a better state of things and tells them that he has come to preach peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

I shall, this evening, try to follow his example, and though I cannot do so with equal steps, yet have I in my bosom the same earnest desire for the souls of my hearers as the Apostle had. I pray that all of you may be brought to peace with God through Jesus Christ.

First, this evening, I shall give some reasons why those of you who are not reconciled to God should desire peace with Him. When we have weighed these I shall, secondly, endeavor to negotiate the terms of peace, and then, thirdly, we shall lay before you a claim or proclamation which is publicly asserted, and to be universally maintained, namely, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

I. To begin, then, I shall endeavor to offer to the unconverted REASONS WHY THEY SHOULD DESIRE TO BE AT PEACE. May I not urge as the first reason that it is not commendable to be at enmity with any of the wise and good? It is best to be at peace with all men, but it is incumbent

upon us to be in friendship with holy men. I should deeply regret to have any one for my enemy, but if he were a godly person I should consider it a calamity. If the angels of Heaven were opposed to us it would have an ill look, even those holy beings would not needlessly take offense.

But when it comes to opposition to the infinitely good, just, and holy God, who in his right mind can do other than bewail it, and desire to see it ended by a gracious peace? Strife against evil, injustice, and tyranny is honorable, but to contend with uprightness, goodness, and holiness is deplorable. No possible benefit can arise from a conflict in which we

are on the wrong side. If God is for us, none can successfully fight against us. But to have God opposed to us is, in itself, the chief of evils. My hearer, "Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace, for thereby good shall come unto you."

The second reason ought to have weight with every honest man. It is this: that the war in which you are engaged is an unjust one. It never ought to have been begun. There was never any justifiable cause for its outbreak. God was unjustly and wickedly assailed by His ungrateful creature. What ought never to have been begun had better be dropped as soon as possible. Sin is war against right, against love, against happiness. Transgression of God's Law is a transgression of commands most equitable and beneficent.

To love evil is dishonorable, wrong, unfair, unjust, and the conscience of man tells him it is so. To be at war with God is to fight against Truth and justice, and to contend for falsehood, unholiness, injustice, unrighteousness. When men love that which is right, and good, and true, and yield themselves up to God's will, then the war is over. But inasmuch as the war against God consists in our doing the wrong, and

loving the wrong, and thinking the wrong, and clinging to the wrong--such a war, in the very nature of things--ought to come to a close.

May the Holy Spirit set this in its true colors and convince every one of you that not to love God is the most shameful of evils, the most detestable of enormities. How can it ever be justifiable for the creature to contend against the Creator? Shall the clay rise against the potter? Will it ever become a right thing for children to rebel against their parents? The ox fed at the stall will serve its owner--shall it be right that we, being fed by God, should yet refuse Him our service? The natural order of the relationship between us and our Creator involves in all justice that we should be conformed to His will.

O Men, will you choose the ways and wages of unrighteousness and cover yourselves with confusion? Would God there were in you an honest judgment to judge uprightly. Besides, what evil has our Creator done us that we should go to war against Him? What quality is there in God that we ought to hate? What is there that we can justly challenge in the Character of God which might righteously provoke our antagonism? Is He not Kindness itself? Does He not overflow with loving kindness? Sends He not His rain upon the just and upon the unjust? Does He not command His sun to rise upon the evil as well as the good?

Has He not sent us fruitful seasons and kept His Covenant, that day and night, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, should not cease? For which of these things should we rebel against Him? Some of you are possessed of riches-- should you, for that cause, forget the God that gave them to you? Others of you are in sound, robust health--should you violate the commands of Him who gives you this choicest of blessings? We appeal to you, Brothers and Sisters, why are you at war with your

God? If He were a cruel tyrant, if He were unjust, if He trod you beneath His feet, if His government were malicious and degrading I could understand your warfare! But it is an evil, an unjust, a villainous war--because the Lord is full of mercy and His name is Love. O that men would end their rebellion at this hour while we summon them to do so in the name of God! Eternal Spirit convict them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and lead them to the peace-speaking blood!

A third argument for ending the war may be drawn from the fact that he who began it has been terribly defeated, and is at this moment a prisoner. He who began the war is Satan, the arch enemy. Our first parents did not first rebel-- man was the dupe of an older rebel. Apollyon, once an angel, conceived ambitious thoughts, and would gladly have become equal with his Maker, but he was banished from Heaven by just decree.

And then resorting to this lower region, sought out our mother Eve, and seduced our race, hoping to maintain the war against the Lord of Hosts by inciting us to cast off our allegiance. Little has he gained by this stratagem! Overwhelming has been his defeat! Hurled from the battlements of Heaven at first, he has worn his chain wearily these many years, seeking rest and finding none, dreading that day of wrath when he shall be dragged at the chariot wheels of our Divine Redeemer, and then consigned to the Hell of old prepared for him.

Jesus who once was slain, has led captivity captive. He whose heel was bitten by the old dragon has broken the serpent's head. Revolt, O Man, against the prince of the power of the air--follow him no longer! Take up arms against the demon monarch--refuse from now on to follow his beck and call. What right has the devil to reign over you? He neither made you, preserved you, or blessed you! He is only evil, and that

continually will he do unto you. Strike for your freedom, strike at once, and shake off his galling yoke.

For him the everlasting fire has been prepared--why must you share it? The wages of sin will be death--why continue in so unprofitable a service? May God grant that you may escape the wrath to come that knows no end, by turning against your old master and enlisting beneath the banner of your Savior. Down with the black, sin-stained, sulphurous colors, and run up the red Cross! Exchange the black Diabolus for the fair Immanuel, and peace shall come unto you.

These are three good reasons, but there are many others, and among them is this one--the force which is brought against you is utterly impossible for you effectually to resist. It is well when we contemplate warfare to sit down and see whether we are equal to the combat. What man is he that with one thousand can meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? Now, consider this, you that forget God. If you oppose God, with whom is it that you set yourselves in battle array?

Can your puny arm hope to rival the right hand of Jehovah? Can you thunder with a voice like His? Were He a creature like yourselves, you might hope for victory. Were He limited in any degree, you might summon all your strength and hold out in the day of conflict. But who can contend against Omnipotence? Who shall stand against the Almighty God? As well might the fly hope to quench the sun when he has already burned up his wings in a candle! As well might you seek to dry up the Atlantic, or bid Niagara leap up the rock instead of down! As well might you hope to stay the moon in its course, or to pluck the stars from their places, as think to stand against God!

No, if you had all Heaven, and earth, and Hell beneath your feet, yet could God overcome you, for He has made all these things and can

overthrow both them and you with His mere will. Let not the wax contend with the fire, nor the stubble with the flame. Let not man, who is but nothingness, think that he can contend with his Maker. You know already how foolish it is to strive against the natural laws of God--and you will find it equally so to contend against His moral government.

A man stands in the way of a steam engine rushing on at express speed--he knows that according to the laws of nature its weight and velocity effectually prevent his stopping its course. Do you call it courage on his part that he stands on the track and defies the iron horse? It is not courage--it is foolhardiness, it is madness, it is suicide! Yet this is nothing in comparison to what you are doing in placing yourself in opposition to the Lord. God will not alter His laws for you. Why should He? They are just and right--why should He change them? Fire will burn, and if a drunken madcap persists in thrusting his arm between the bars of a furnace, shall fire cease from its nature to secure him immunity from his folly?

If a man exposes himself to the rush of an avalanche, can he expect the rolling mass to suspend itself in mid air for him? If a mariner will go to sea in a vessel worm-eaten and not seaworthy, will the waves pity the boat and cease from their rough play and rougher warfare? No, they roll around the leaking craft as they would have done around a better vessel. They toss it--they sink it--the careless mariner perishes. If a man will act contrary to natural laws, he must suffer for it. If you dash your head against a granite rock it will not, for your sake, soften into down.

And it is just so with the moral laws of God's government--certain results follow from sinful courses of action-- inevitably and as a matter of course. Yield, then, to the Divine wisdom which has rightly ordained the consequences of sin. Do not necessitate your own

destruction. Submit freely where rebellion is absurd. Against Omnipotence it is folly to strive. Be wise, then, and submit to the power of the Omnipotent God.

Further, remember that any resistance which you may be able to offer to the Lord your God will be carried on at a very fearful price. You will have to bear the expenses of the war which you foolishly prolong. All the time that you resist the Almighty you are doing it at your own risk and hazard. And what is that risk and hazard? Why this--that even if you should yield to Him ultimately, so as to be saved--you will regret these sins and these rebellions as long as you live. Even when they are forgiven, your iniquities will be a source of perpetual regret to you. They will be a source of danger and weakness to you as long as you live--for though God heals the wounds of our sin--we shall carry the scars even to our graves.

Moreover, if you should never receive the saving mercy of God, remember these rebellions of yours are noted against you, and when the Great Judge comes to deal with you and lays His justice to the line, and righteousness to the plum-met--for all this you will have to give an account, for all this God will levy His Law upon you--and you shall be made to feel the weight of His terrible hand of vengeance.

Furthermore, let me remind you of one thing else, namely, that your total defeat is absolutely certain sooner or later. No man ever did set himself against God and prosper for long. His patience suffers long and is kind, but there is an

end to it. Look at Pharaoh. If ever a man defied God thoroughly, it was that king of Egypt. "Who is the Lord," said he, "that I should obey Him?" He bore up against warnings and actual plagues--each time when he was broken down he defied the Lord again as soon as the pressure of trouble was removed.

But when he fancied that the infinite God had emptied out His quiver, he found to his cost that there was yet another arrow left, and that a deadly shaft which would lodge in his heart and lay him prostrate. He said in his heart, "I have outlived the plague of the locusts, I have outlived the lightning, and the darkness, and the murrain that fell upon men and beasts. Who is Jehovah that I should care for any further plagues? I will defy Him to do His worst, and fight on to the bitter end."

As he dashes along in his war chariots, with his mighty hosts at his side, hastening to pursue the captives who are fleeing from him, he fancies himself to be omnipotent. But when he finds his wheels dragging heavily in the depths of the sea, he turns to flee from the face of the Lord. All too late was his flight, for God gave the word and the liquid walls which had stood like solid masonry, leaped down upon him--and then the haughty king knew that Jehovah could vanquish the proud, and put down the stout-hearted.

For this cause was he raised up--that he might be a standing testimony to all generations that whosoever rebels against the Lord shall meet with a final and irretrievable overthrow. O Sinner, your fate may not be to be drowned in the Red Sea, but worse than that, you will be shut in forever where hope is shut out, and where misery abounds. The punishment of lost souls will prove to them, beyond all controversy, that it is a futile, a bitter, a horrible thing to be at war with the Lord of Hosts.

None can endure the terror of Jehovah's wrath--why is it that they so lightly dare to provoke it? Yield, Man! It is folly to stand out against God--you cannot hope to win. Sue for peace tonight, and may God send it to you. Without such peace your future is darkened with thick clouds, and the presages of an horrible tempest. The Lord most surely

comes, and at His coming woe will be the portion of His enemies--

"At His Presence nature shakes,
Earth affrighted hastens to flee,
Solid mountains melt like wax,
What will then become of you?
Who His advent may abide
You that glory in your shame,
Will you find a place to hide
When the world is wrapt in flame?" Let me tell you, (and this is the most glad note that is in my heart tonight), let me tell you it will be altogether to your advantage to be at peace with God! It will be for your present happiness. It will be for your eternal welfare. A soul at war with God is also opposed to its own best interests--but a heart that has yielded to Divine love, that has cast down its weapons, that has closed in with Divine mercy--is a soul at peace, at rest, a soul that is ready for joy on earth, and for bliss unspeakable above! Were there no hereafter, it is profitable even for this present life to have God for our Friend. But when we think of the eternal future, even the most superficial consideration suffices to convince us of the urgent necessity of being reconciled to God.

Be wise and consider, then, take my advice and do that which will be most gainful to you--namely, seek peace, and yield to Christ who is Lord of All. Meanwhile, my heart's desire and prayer for you is that you may be saved, and to that end may the Holy Spirit visit you, soften your heart, guide your judgment and direct your will, so that Jesus may from now on be yours, and be your peace.

II. Now I shall turn, in the second place, to DECLARE THE TERMS ON WHICH PEACE MAY BE NEGOTIATED. I come with a white flag tonight. I ask for a parley, an armistice, a truce. God, meanwhile, holds back His

thunderbolts, and bids the sinner live while mercy is proclaimed to him. Would you have peace, then? Are you in earnest for friendship with your God? Then learn that first of all, the great sine qua non is that peace be made through an ambassador nominated of God, namely, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Here, in the text, it says, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ." There will be no peace between God and any man who despises the Person, name and work of Jesus Christ. Reject that name and there is no other whereby you can be saved. This is the foundation for peace which was laid of old, and other foundation can no man lay. Hear, then, and let all diffi-

culty vanish from your mind while we speak of that excellent, that all-glorious Person whom the Lord has set forth as Heaven's Plenipotentiary, the Ambassador of the Eternal.

This Jesus Christ is God Himself--God over all blessed forever--knowing the mind of God, and able to negotiate with Divine authority. But He is also Man--man such as you are--Man of the substance of His mother, most truly and really Man, and, therefore, He is fitted to deal graciously with man. Oh, then, because He is your Brother, accept Him as Ambassador. He is fit to be a Daysman, and an Arbitrator, and a Mediator since He has sympathy with you, and yet has equality with God. If you, yourself, had the choice of an umpire you could not select one so every way fitted for the office. His love to you, His goodwill to our poor fallen race, His assumption of our Nature, His death in mortal form--all should lead you to commit your case into His faithful hands. God lead you to do so at once, for the matter is urgent. Now further, concerning the negotiation, I would say to you, O Enemy of God, that the great difficulty is put away which might have prevented peace between you and God!

The Justice of God which you have provoked has been satisfied by Jesus Christ! The sacrifice of Jesus has made recompense for the injury done by human sin. There is no difficulty now on God's part--no difficulty in forgiving any sinner that believes in Jesus Christ. Your sin was a great stone which lay at the door, but it is rolled away because Jesus died. Let that comfort you. If you are anxious to have peace, God's terms are these, (I call them terms for want of a better word, but I mean no legality thereby).

He asks no price of you. He demands no millions of money. No, He demands no pounds at your hands. If you had the wealth of the Indies, the Lord would despise such a bribe. If He were hungry, He would not tell you. If He were thirsty He would not come to you for drink, for Lebanon would not be sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof for a burnt sacrifice. He asks no gold from you, He asks no suffering from you--no passing through dreary penance--or horrible despairing. It would be no satisfaction to Him to see you suffer.

He delights in happiness. He is pleased to see us happy when it is safe for others that we should be so. Neither does He ask you to achieve merits to bring to Him. You could not if He should demand it. You have sinned before and will sin again. All hope for you to make up the faultiness of the past by the perfection of the future is gone. You have broken the Law. You cannot keep it. If you shall labor after life under the Covenant of Works, you must perish. God, therefore, does not ask you to save yourself by your own works, but He graciously tells you that He is full of mercy, full of compassion, delighting to forgive, ready to pass by your sins, and that at once.

Here is all that the Lord asks of you, and this He will enable you to do--trust sincerely in His only begotten Son. On the Cross Jesus suffered--turn your eyes to that Cross. He rose again, He ascended to

Heaven--trust Him to save your soul, because He ever lives to make intercession for you--

"All the doing is completed,
Now it is 'look, believe, and live.'
None can purchase His salvation,
Life's a gift that God must give.
Grace, through righteousness, is reigning,
Not of works, lest man should boast.
Man must take the mercy freely,
Or eternally be lost."

Down with your weapons of rebellion--surrender them, confess that you have erred--confess it in your Father's own bosom. Conscious of His love, be conscious of your sins. Confess that you have done wrong. Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord. Nurture not within your bosom the viper that will be your destruction. Pluck it out and hurl it from you in the strength of Him that died to save you.

Now, is this hard? Are these severe demands? Is it a hardship to confess the wrong which you have done? Is that too much? Is it not reasonable that you should do it? You cannot be healed and continue to wound yourself. How can you hope that the poison will be extracted from your veins while you continue to drink it? No, Man, look to the Cross, and hate your sin, for sin nailed the Well-Beloved to the tree. Look up to the Cross, and you will kill sin, for the strength of Jesus' love will make you strong to put down your tendencies to sin.

"Well, but," you say, "Is there nothing for me to bring, nothing for me to do?" Answer, "There is nothing for you to bring, there is nothing for you to do, but there is much for you to take--for you have to

receive Jesus as your All in All." It is your duty to throw down your weapons of rebellion, and to say tonight, "Great God I yield. My wanderings now are at an end. I yield my soul to You, Jesus, come and save me. And when You have saved me, help me to obey You. Behold, I give myself up to You. Infinite Mercy of God, receive me! Precious Blood of Jesus, cleanse me! Holy Spirit, sanctify me! God, my Creator, create me new! Jesus, Lover of my soul, teach my soul to love You." In this way peace is found, even peace through Jesus Christ.

III. And now, thirdly, and to conclude. I have to make public A CLAIM which Peter made on this occasion, when he spoke to Cornelius and his kinsfolk. I have a claim which ought to be urged wherever the Gospel is preached. "He is Lord of all." This means, first, that Jesus Christ, who died on Calvary, is in the mediatorial kingdom, which His Father has given Him, Lord of all mankind. He is Lord not of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile. Not of one race and nation, but of ALL the tribes of Adam ever born. He is Lord of all.

Remember that text, "As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." The great object of Christ's mediatorial kingdom is the salvation of the elect--and in order to compass that grand result, power is given to Christ over all flesh--that is, over all mankind. And this last Truth of God is the reason why we are enabled honestly to preach the Gospel to every creature under Heaven. Because Christ has power over all flesh, we preach the Gospel to all flesh. Because He is Lord of all we are permitted to preach the Gospel to all, and yes, to all who come within its hearing, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely."

Sons of men, the Son of God is King over you! You are not ruled today so much by the iron scepter of an absolute God as by the silver scepter

of the Mediator, Jesus Christ. You are under His government today. You may hate Him, you may rail against Him, but, "I will declare the decree," says the Psalmist, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." The heathens rage, the princes take counsel together, but the Lord has made Jesus Christ the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and under His reign we dwell. This is a most gladsome Truth, for thus we live under the reign of Sovereign Mercy, under the reign of the Incarnate. God Immanuel, God with us.

Look, O Sinner! You needed a Mediator between you and God, and Jesus stands in that place! You need no Mediator between you and Christ--approach Him as you now are, and His gracious heart will gladly receive you. You cannot come to God except through a Mediator! You have to deal with Christ, and may deal with Him now! Come to Him. You need no one to introduce you. Come just as you are. O may His blessed Spirit sweetly incline you to come, and "kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

The text, by declaring the reigning power of the Lord Jesus, shows us most encouragingly the most solid of reasons for yielding to Him our trust and obedience. If He is Lord of All. If all things are put under Him, then I may with safety rely upon Him. This is the Man, the exalted Man, whom we, unseen, adore! Of Whom it is written, "You made Him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands. You have put all things under His feet. All sheep and oxen, yes, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the sea."

Now, the Apostle rightly enough says, "But now we see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." He is reigning in Heaven, and it is ordained that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Oh, then, trust Him, for all power is His! He is exalted on High to give repentance and remission of sins. All His power is linked with mercy. Grace perfumes all His attributes.

Because Jesus is Lord, I pray you, my fellow Men, to yield Him reverence and serve Him. Obey Him, for He is your Lord and Sovereign. It ought to be the easier to obey Him because He is numbered with the human race. The old history which we learned when we were children told us that the Welsh could not bear the yoke of an English king. They wanted to have a prince born in their own country. Therefore, their English conqueror brought before them his own son, born in their own principality, and they accepted him as Prince of Wales.

God reigns over us, but that we may love His reign He has anointed His own Son our own Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus the Infinite deigned to be an Infant, He who sustains all things was laid upon a woman's breast. There is no Man more a man than Jesus, and yet in no respect is He other than equal with God.

Let us, then accept the rule of Jesus. This is the ladder that Jacob saw--the bottom of which rests on the earth, near to you--your feeble feet may reach it.

But the top reaches to Heaven, and now between earth and Heaven, between man and God, there is a ladder that never can be broken--by which sinners may ascend to the Glory of God! O love Him, then! With all your hearts cherish the name and honor of the Incarnate God, Immanuel. Because He is so unspeakably glorious and gracious, serve Him with joy and gladness!

Be it also known that Jesus the Savior must be received as Lord in the souls of those whom He redeems. You must obey Him if you trust Him, or else your trust will be mere hypocrisy. If we trust a physician we

follow his prescriptions. If we trust a guide we follow his directions, and if we fully rely on Jesus, we obey His gracious commands. The faith which saves is a faith which produces a change of life, and subdues the soul to obedience to the Lord. Be not deceived--where Jesus comes, He comes to reign. Without submission to His will and Word, you are without the safety of His Atonement.

The ship is saved from the rock because it obeys the pilot's hand as he moves the helm. If it were untrue to the steerage it would perish with the best of helmsmen on board. It is most just that He who bought us, sought us, found us, saved us, and preserves us should have our loving allegiance. And so assuredly it must be, or no peace can be established between us and God. Let us welcome His sway and pray Him to exert His power. Be this our daily prayer--

"Almighty King of saints,
These tyrant lusts subdue--
Drive the old serpent from his seat,
And all my powers renew.
This done, my cheerful voice
Shall loud hosannas raise;
My soul shall glow with gratitude,
My lips proclaim Your praise." And lastly, let me say I do not put this to you as a matter of choice as to whether you will or will not submit to the will of God and seek reconciliation with Him. Neither do I speak with bated breath when as a herald I hereby proclaim Jesus to be both Lord and God. But in the name of Him that lives and was dead and is alive forevermore, and has the keys of Hell and of death--I say, in His name--I DEMAND of you that you obey Him, and receive Him as the Christ of God. Yield yourselves to Him who is Lord of All. Do you refuse the summons that I give you now as His officer tonight?

Then take heed what you do, for as the Lord lives you shall answer for this in the Great Day of His appearing. Behold He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which crucified Him--and you who despise Him must be judged by Him. If you reject Him, you shall nevertheless see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and dead.

I say, again, then--I come to you not to flatter and deceive you. I come not to plead with you as though my Lord and Master were on equal terms with you. He summons you to surrender! He bids you throw down your arms and accept His mercy. He is not afraid of your opposition. Neither does He need your friendship. It is His Grace which leads Him to invite you to peace. He condescends to treat you thus, whom He might have sent into Hell with one word of His lips years ago. If you refuse Him you shall answer for it. On your heads shall be your own blood, and in that day when Heaven and earth shall pass away like a scroll, you, without a shelter--you, without an Advocate--you, without an excuse, shall be banished from His Presence to endure the wrath of God.

The Lord grant His mercy that not one of you may stand out against Him, but this night, before another sun rises, may there be peace established on a sure footing between you and God, for Christ is our peace. May you take Him and trust Him, and be reconciled to God. And to God shall be the glory forever and forever. Amen and Amen.

Chapter 45

Done In A Day, But Wondered At Forever

(No. 953)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the Lord of hosts. They shall call every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree." Zechariah 3:9,10.

WE cull the text from one of Zechariah's most instructive visions. It is a stone from a diamond field. All the context is rich in precious things, but we cannot, though we would be very glad to do so, linger over them this morning. We must be satisfied with this one brilliant stone. Taking the text as it stands, and by itself, it is evidently descriptive of those long expected and happy days when God will once and for all forgive His Israel and restore His long-banished ones to their former place of favor and ofjoy. As a consequence thereof, He shall cause them to dwell in their own land under the happiest circumstances, surrounded by peace and enjoyment, praising and blessing the God of mercy.

But we may, from the dealings of God with one particular case, usually extract the rule of the Divine procedure--for the Lord is under no necessity to alter His modes of action, and is not subject to change. As He works in one case, so may we expect Him to do in another, if the circumstances taken in are all similar. I purpose this morning, to draw, therefore, from the text nothing about Israel after the flesh, but much concerning the spiritual Israel--believing souls who are the true seed of the father of the faithful.

Our object will be to glorify the fullness and richness of the Divine mercy which pardons the greatest sin and sheds abroad the most delightful peace. May the Holy Spirit now instruct both the preacher and the congregation. While all our eyes are gazing upon the promise of Grace, may it be fulfilled in our midst.

I. Our first remarks will gather around the question, WHAT IS TO BE REMOVED? What does the text speak of? The reply is, "the iniquity of that land." The term "iniquity" or, in-equity, is a very comprehensive one--including everything that is not equitable, not right towards God, not just towards man. It comprehends the entire compass of sin, for a sin of commission is an in-equity of excess, and an omission is an in-equity of falling short. The text, therefore, in the term "iniquity" comprehends every violation of equity either by way of transgression or shortcoming.

It includes sins against the first and second table, sins of the body, the hand, the tongue. Sins which more immediately spring from and end in the soul, sins against God and man, sins of youth, and sins of old age. Widely extended as iniquity is, God declares that He will remove all of it from His people in one day. The great variety of the sin to be removed is clear from the additional words, "that land."

The offenses of a whole nation make up a complete catalogue of crimes. When high and low, old and young, rich and poor, literate and illiterate are considered as one body, the mass of their united sin is diversified, indeed. In the throng I see a despiser of parents in one place, and a Sabbath-breaker in another. Search the land over and you will be sure to find liars, slanderers, drunkards, gluttons, swearers, thieves, harlots, murderers, and I know not what of wickedness besides. The one city of Jerusalem was so sinful that Ezekiel likened it to a boiling pot, and said of it, "Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose

scum is there. She has wearied herself with lies. In your filthiness is lewdness." In a land so large as Israel, though comparatively small, there must have been criminals of all kinds--wretches defiled with sins of the blackest dye--a more than Newgate calendar of reprobates. And yet it is promised that all these varieties of sin shall be removed in one day! From sins of thought and heart right up to blood-red murder, and the most desperate adulteries--all are spoken of as to be removed. The iniquity of a land, however, is not only that of the generation then dwelling in it, but the accumulated sin ofpast generations, even as we read that, "the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." If anyone would speak correctly of the sins of Israel he would not mean the sins of the Israel of that particular hour, but the heaped-up sins of their fathers who had provoked God many long generations before. Now grasp the grand idea of mercy's boundless plan--in one day-- the promise declares that God shall not only remove all the sins of one man, but all the sins of many men! Yes, and all the sins that have accumulated and laid up a store of wrath against a whole nation! What mercy is this which blots out the long records of the past, sweeps out the rotting heaps of old transgression and cleanses the Augean stable of a guilty nation's sin? "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." What a miracle of infinite mercy! The iniquity rises before us like a huge mountain whose peak defies the thunderbolts of God, but lo, eternal Mercy, like a sea, swallows up the mountain and it is gone, to be found no more. It is clear, then, from the text, that the Lord is able to forgive sins of every shade and form.

What is your sin, my Hearer? Is it one peculiar to yourself? Yet can God forgive it. Are your sins of many sorts, so that you could not set them in order before your eyes because they are too varied and multitudinous? Yet can He remove them all in one day. No matter though

one of your sins lie, as it were, in the far east, and another is found in the far west--He can cleanse the whole land of your nature. Though one of your sins is an attack upon the heights of Heaven, and another dives into the lowest blasphemies of Hell--He is both the God of the hills and of the valleys--and such enormities as yours He can remove. When a whole land is purged, sins similar to yours must have been in the number of those blotted out. Therefore there is hope for you, since what has been done can be done again. What are your sins? Are they as scarlet? "No," says one, "they are of another hue." Well, then, if they are crimson He will make one as wool and the other as snow. He will take away all iniquity. He will forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy. Whatever their tint and shade, and however double-dyed and ingrained our sins may be, the blood of Jesus can remove them all in one day.

In addition, let every sinner here remember that the text indicates not only variety of sin, but vast quantities of sin-- the sin of a land consisting of millions of people is no light thing to remove in one day, yet the promise guarantees it. Eternal love takes to itself the new sharp threshing instrument of the Atonement, and therewith beats the mountains of sin till they become as chaff and the wind does carry them away. Learn, then, that however many your sins may be--you might as well count the sands on the seashore as number your transgressions--they can all be removed from you as far as the east is from the west.

As the tide covers all the sand, so can forgiveness cover all your sin. As night covers all things, so can love cast a mantle over all your wrong doings. As the sun exhales a myriad dewdrops, so can eternal love cause all your sins to pass away. In the case of Israel, the iniquity to be removed had been continuous and aggravated. The iniquity of the

land of Israel was an iniquity which had continued from generation to generation. Their first fathers rebelled in the wilderness. They sinned afterwards under the judges. They revolted under the kings. More and more they went astray, and when sold into captivity they still transgressed.

If cured of one sin they became more inveterate in another. Though idolatry had been driven out of the Jews before our Savior's time, yet their heart was still apostate, for they crucified the Lord of Glory.

So, my dear Hearer, if the continued sin of the Jews, which had for so long a period accumulated could be put away from the land in one day, so can yours. O you sinners of ripe years, O you transgressors of seventy or eighty years--there is hope for you!

From the text I hear the silver trumpets ring, "I will remove the iniquity in one day"--the continuous iniquity-- then why not your continued iniquity? Though you have added stone of sin to stone till the mound of your transgressions stands as a memorial to God against you, yet He can remove the heap, and that in one single day. Is not this good news to sinners? I am sure it is to me! I do devoutly bless and thank my heavenly Father that He has put such great promises in His Word, and spoken so largely of His mercy to the guilty--for mine is a case of which I am obliged to say as Baxter did, "O Lord of Mercy, give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn. I must have great mercy or I perish."

See, then, in the text, the power of God to remove sin very remarkably set forth. The Prophet speaks of the sin of a whole land, of a most sinful land, a highly privileged land which had turned every privilege into provocation. Yet in one day the Lord would remove it all! The inference is clear, O penitent Sinner, that He can remove your sin, also. O you Hearer of the Gospel, convicted in your own conscience of

having been a trifler with Divine things, despair not! Though you have gone as far as you can in sin, the Lord, through Jesus Christ, can put your sin away.

I know how your mind is this morning. If you are aroused to see your state by nature, you are mourning that ever you had a being. O Man, it were, indeed, enough to make you mourn that you were born if there were not hope of a sec-

ond birth, and hope in the infinite mercy of God for the removal of your hideous defilements! Take heart from the text, and approach your gracious King through Jesus the appointed Mediator--for if you believe, He will this day, even this day--take away all your transgressions, receive you graciously, and love you freely. The wayfaring man, though a fool, may in this text clearly see that our God is abundantly able to pardon, for He removes a nation's accumulated iniquity in one day.

II. Secondly, we shall consider WHAT WAS TO BE DONE WITH IT. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." It shall be remitted and forgiven. In some parts of Scripture we read of sin being "wiped out," and the expression is remarkably expressive. Sometimes the wiping out refers to the housewife's meaning of the word--when the dish is wiped out and turned bottom upwards. So can God take our sinful souls and wipe them right out so that they shall be perfectly clean--and the pot which was filthy and had death in it shall be, "holiness unto the Lord."

At other times the wiping out refers to the erasure of notes made upon tablets. Some writings were cleared off with a sponge. At other times, if the tablet was of wax and the marks were made with an iron pen, or stylus, then the wax was softened and smoothed again--and all evidence of the record totally disappeared. Though our sins are written with an iron pen and engraved with the point of a diamond upon the very horns

of our altars, yet will the Lord make the record to disappear when His mercy is revealed to our faith.

He blots out the handwriting which was against us. He puts it out of the way, nailing it to the Cross. He makes our sins, like clouds, to pass away forever. God can, O Sinner, wipe out your transgressions so that they shall not exist! Through the precious blood of Jesus He can finish your transgressions, and make an end of all your sins.

If we take the word "remove" as it stands in the text, then it is as though a great stone lay at the door of God's mercy. "Sin lies at the door," who shall roll away the stone for us? "I," says God, "will remove the iniquity of this land in one day." Or it is like a burden pressing on our shoulders. Speak of the load which Atlas carried, when he is fabled to have sustained the world. it was nothing compared with this more than Atlantean load which crushes us down, and will crush us to the lowest Hell. "I will remove it," says the Savior, and He has kept His Word.

He took the load upon His own shoulders and so removed it from us. And then He carried it right up to the Cross, and from the top of Calvary He hurled it into His sepulcher. And there He left it, a dead and buried thing. And if it is searched for, it shall not be found, "Yes, it shall not be," says the Lord. He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness for all His people.

It is as though sin were looked upon as a substance, exceedingly heavy, but capable of removal. Not, however, capable of removal by any human hands, for it is as firmly settled in its place as the everlasting hills. But the Lord plucks it up by its roots, removes it, and casts it into the depths of the sea. Blessed be His name! He has so removed our sins, as Believers, that none can ever bring them back again to accuse

or condemn us. He has fulfilled the promise, "I will remove the iniquity of that land." And once removed by Sovereign Grace, it shall never be brought back again.

"As far as the east is from the west"--measure that, you astronomers! "As far as the east is from the west"--O swift-winged angel, compute the space! "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." The Lord has done it. It is finished! Our iniquity is removed. The depths have covered our sins, they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Listen patiently to this word. The removal of our transgressions lies in four things. There is the removal of the punishment. The man whom God pardons cannot be punished for sin. It were a mock pardon that left a man in the executioner's custody. The royal pardon bids every angel of justice hold off his hand. Your sins shall never rise against you, Sinner, if God forgives them. For you there is no Hell. For you no never-dying worm, no fire unquenchable. Forgiven! The sentence is stayed, no, revoked.

The removal of transgression implies next, the taking away of the guilt of it as before the Lord. Sin has made God angry. It is a breach of His Law. It is a dishonor to His name. Yet God will forgive the believing sinner so that no anger shall linger in His bosom against him. He will cast his sins behind His back, put them out of His mind. Oh, miracle of miracles! Can God put anything behind His back when He sees all things? Can Omniscience find a corner where His eyes can never peer? Yes. He says, "I will cast your sins behind My back." O God, Your Word in this case is marvelous and strange, but we perceive right well Your gracious meaning--the transgressions of Your people shall not be remembered against them any more forever--their guilt is utterly removed.

The removal of sin implies, thirdly, the putting away of the defilement

of sin. Sin makes us to be polluted creatures. We are like degraded priests no longer clad in fair white garments, but wearing sordid, and filthy robes. When the sin is put away, the defilement consequent upon it also is cleansed and we become pure before God--personally acceptable with God. What a mercy is this! It is no less a mercy to be cleansed from personal defilement than to be delivered from future punishment.

Again, the removal of sin includes, in the fourth place, the total destruction of the dominion of sin over our nature. Not that in us sin has lost all its power--but that in the Believer it has lost its reigning power, and is dethroned. The position of sin in a natural man is that of a king on his throne. The position of sin in a Christian is that of a bandit hiding in secret places trying to get back its old usurped dominion, but failing in the attempt, for "sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." Thus the promise of the text is a very full one. The removal of sin includes the remission of the punishment, the putting away of the guilt, the cleansing of the defilement, the dethronement of the evil power. Ah, my dear Hearers, my heart leaps within me for joy to think that I am able to tell you that such a fourfold, four times precious blessing, is to be conferred by God upon poor sinful men.

O Sinner, how I wish you would have it this day. I love the word "this day." If in one day a land's iniquity could be so completely removed, why not yours today? Why not on this Lord's-day? How true a Sunday would it become to you? If you believe you have your sin removed, faith finds out the great Sin-Bearer and sees the transgression borne away by Him. O that pardoning Grace were given to everyone in this assembly, so that it could be safely said, "The Lord has removed the iniquity of the whole congregation of the Tabernacle in one day."

Talk not of bell ringing--oh, what heart ringing, what heavenly songs, what soundings of the golden harps there would be if it might be so! O that the Almighty Spirit would apply the atoning blood, and remove the iniquity of all this multitude in one single day! Do it, Lord, and we will bless Your gracious name!

III. But we must turn to the third point, which is this--HOW LONG IT TAKES TO REMOVE THE SIN. "I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day." It took a great many days to pile up the sin, but one day sees it removed. The iniquity of the land began when the people entered it. They had not been long in Canaan before Achan took of the forbidden thing, and he was but a type of the rest.

They were a stiff-necked and rebellious people whose very nature was averse to the service of the Lord their God. Throughout the hundreds of years of the judges, the kings, the captivities, and so on, they continued to revolt from the Divine authority. They heaped up transgression till it stood aloft in mountainous heights. And yet when the dreadful pile was completed, the Lord made it to disappear in one day. Yes, and our sins have taken a long time to heap up--they comprise the sins of our youth, the sins of our manhood, the transgressions of our riper years--and it may be we have added to these the sins of our old age.

One may say, as he looks at his sin, "That is forty years' work." Another may mournfully confess, "That is seventy years' accumulation." If each sin deserves a tear, O to be a Naomi! For we have need that clouds and rains dwell in our eyes. Our souls have need of all the watery things that nature can produce. But we may dry our tears, for though many days were taken for the formation of the sin, the Lord says He will remove it all in one day. In one single day seventy years of

sin are forever put away by our Lord Jesus--truly for this His name shall be called "WONDERFUL."

Think, dear Brethren, that this iniquity could not have been removed by all the repenting in the world. Though a man should repent of sin, if it were possible, not for one day, but for twenty thousand years, yet he could not remove his sin by repentance. Man tries to act as a bleacher to his sin--he dips the stained garment into the strong liquid which is to make it white, hoping that some spots will be removed. But when be takes it out again, if his eyes are clear, he says, "Alas, it seems as spotted as ever. I laid it to soak in that which I thought full surely would take out the stain, but so far as I can see, there is another stain added to the rest. I find myself worse instead of better. I must add a more pungent salt. I must use a stronger lye. I must make my tears more briny, I must fetch them up from the deep salt wells of my heart."

He lays his vesture again to soak, but each time, as he takes it out, his own eyes become more keen and he sees more foulness in the garment than he had observed before. Then he goes and takes unto himself niter and much soap. But when he has used it all, when he has gone to his Church, when he has gone to his Chapel, when he has repeated his prayers, at-

tended to ceremonies, done, I know not what, to prove the genuineness of his repentance--ah, the iniquity is still there, and will be there, and must be--let him do what he may. Yet what your repenting cannot do in thousands of years God can do for you, Sinner--and that in one single day!

The people of Israel had been chastised very severely. Many times they were carried away captive and pillaged and robbed. But as often as they were chastised they so often returned to their sins, till the Lord

said, "Why should you be smitten any more? You will revolt more and more." Now, what many years of chastisement could not remove, God's mercy removed in a single day. Oh, how some of you have been flogged and whipped! You have lost your property, perhaps. You have lost your health, it may be, through early sin. You have lost the dearest friends you ever had.

You have been tried in body, tried in estate--but for all that you hug your sin, and the guilt of it still clings to you. Ah, but Jehovah Jesus can remove it in one day! What His Providence cannot do, his Grace can do. In one day Infinite Mercy can remove the sin. During all the years that Israel had sinned they had still offered sacrifices, but their sacrifices had never taken away sin. It is clear, since they had to offer the sacrifices every year, that their sins were not removed, for then no further sacrifice would have been needed.

So, my dear Hearer, no sacrifice of yours or mine can ever take away sin. There are still men in what is called this "enlightened nineteenth century" who impertinently claim to be a special caste of priests, and will offer a sacrifice on our behalf before God. Well, let them go on with their worship if they will. Let the priests of Baal cry aloud and spare not even to the chapter's dreadful end--but no sin is ever put away in this fashion.

The one sacrifice of Christ upon Golgotha, the one sin-bearing of transgression upon Calvary has put away sin in one day, and put it away forever, so that no further sacrifice is wanted, no new blood, no new atonement--

"It is done, the great transaction's done," Heaven is satisfied.

Justice is content. Mercy has a free channel. God is glorified. In one day, without help, alone, solitary--God, in the Person of His Son--has put away the transgression of His elect, and put it away forever and

ever.

Thus I might continue to show you the marvelous act of God in putting away iniquity in one day, because the pains of Hell, even, could not have removed sin, not even throughout eternity. Banished from God's Presence, the sinner at the end of ten thousand times ten thousand years would be as guilty as he was before--and as liable, still, to bear the wrath of God. For him there is no hope that suffering could ever make atonement. He must, forever and forever, as long as God's Word is true, lie under the weight of sin.

There ought to be, among Christians, no question about the doctrine of the eternity of punishment. There could be none if men were not wise above what is written, for if Heaven is eternal, Hell must be. "These shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." The two things are put together in such a way that you must doubt the one if you doubt the other. No, you cannot rightly believe God concerning the one side without believing Him as to the other, also.

But herein is the triumph of Christ. Dreadful as sin is, His Cross is more glorious! Awful as the transgression against God's Law is, so awful that none can measure its tremendous deeps, yet more glorious still is that most effectual Atonement which Christ has worked out and brought in--by which in one single day He has removed forever all the sin of His people. Oh, but this is a grand text! Who shall speak of it as he should? I wish that you would feel it, my dear Friends, and that would be better than my speaking upon it.

Let it be, then, literally stated, that in one single moment all the sin which lies upon a sinner can be swept away! The word "one day" is used to show that the act of God in forgiving sin is instantaneous. Christ in one day put away sin by His suffering and death. Faith brings

Christ to us, and --

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

The dying thief had not to wait a month to get pardon, or else he would have died unsaved. He did but say, "Lord, remember me," and the answer came, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." You may have begun this morning the blackest sinner out of Hell--you may, before this service is closed, if God's Grace meets with you--be pure through the precious blood. Who shall describe that wondrous change from darkness into marvelous light, from death into spiritual life? May the Eternal Spirit work such a change as that in you!

Remember, this change is not only possible to ordinary sinners, to such as have been moral and have kept within the bounds of the laws that regulate mankind in reference to themselves--but it is true of the very worst of sinners, the most degraded, depraved, abandoned--those who have gone to the utmost extravagance of transgression. One single day, faith being exercised, will put your guilt all away! One single word from the great King, "Absolvo te," "I absolve you," and all sin is gone!

She to whom Christ said, "Your sins which are many are forgiven you," received the pardon then and there. May that same voice in the power of the Spirit speak to some hearts today! And may they go out of this place justified, saying, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies--who is he that condemns?"

IV. One would like to linger here, but I must not. For we must notice, in the fourth place, WHO IT IS THAT REMOVES INIQUITY IN ONE DAY. Here is the point of the text, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." "I," "I," "I." That accounts for the wonder. What cannot God do? He can pluck the sun from his sphere, quench the lamps of night,

shake the heavens, and dry up the sea--nothing is impossible to God, nor too hard for Him.

"I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." When Jehovah puts His hand to a work, then it is done. All without Him must fail. But when He does it, how readily is it accomplished! It is always, "I," when you come to the pardon of sin. "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions."

How He "I's" it there! "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions." Jehovah alone can say unto the soul, "I am your salvation. Who can forgive sins but God only." He forgives all your iniquities. He laid our sins on Jesus, and He, therefore, Himself takes them away from us. It is the Lord that pardons, the Lord that cleanses evermore. Hope then, O worn-out Transgressor, bowed down with sin--what could not be done by others--God can do!

Tarry a moment over that word "I." Let me take it and translate it. The "I" of Jehovah is not one, but three. To begin, then--"May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you," for it is He who says, "I will remove the iniquity of that land." He was laid as the one foundation stone of our hope, upon which seven eyes are fixed. He who was engraved with the graver's tool when He was fastened to the Cross, and His side was pierced--He it is that has removed the iniquity of His people in one day, by bearing it, by making a recompense to Almighty Justice for it all.

See, then, the Crucified--He uplifts His pierced hands, He bares His open side, and He says--"Sinner, look to Me. I will remove your iniquity in one day." But, "May the love of God be with you," for it is the Father who says, "I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day." The returning prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned," and it was the father, the same offended father, who bid them take off his rags

and kill for him the fatted calf. It was the father who rejoiced that his son that was lost was found, and that he who was dead was alive again. The Father, therefore, removes the sins of His children.

And, "May the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you," for it is the Holy Spirit, also, who says, "I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day." He brings the blood that Jesus shed, the Jesus that the Father gave. He applies it to the conscience, sprinkles it upon the heart, and makes those to be actually and experimentally cleansed who in God's sight were cleansed by the death of Christ. "I will remove it." Oh, did you ever feel within your heart the power of the Holy Spirit removing your iniquity in one day?

I shall never forget when my iniquity was removed. It was, indeed, in one single moment. Wretched I was, and more. My sins terrified, alarmed me--they haunted me day and night. They made me to sit on the doorstep of Hell. But how changed was the scene when I heard and understood that text, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Then I was enabled to look to Jesus, and one look removed mountains. As I looked, my iniquity was forgiven, my joy was overflowing. I had to restrain myself and to do violence to my feelings in order to keep my seat.

If the Methodists cry out, "Hallelujah," I could for once have cried out, "Hallelujah," with the loudest of them! Oh, the bliss of pardon, when it comes by the Holy Spirit! You may hear about it, my Brethren--you may read about it-- and both of these are well in their way. I hope you will continue both to hear and read, but these are not enough. It is essential that you receive the Word with living power within from God Himself, against whom you have offended.

You can only find pardon and peace by looking to Jesus. The simple act of throwing yourself into His dear arms will bring it--nothing else

will. It will come at once, come suddenly--and when it comes it will bring to you results of blessedness that shall know no end. "I," says God, "I will do it." "Give unto the Lord, then, you pardoned, give unto the Lord glory and strength! Give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His name."

Take now your songs and go forth and sing, "O God, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me." If you choose your joy in that sweet verse of our poet you will do well--

"Jesus is become at length, My salvation and my strength! And His praises shall prolong, While I live, my pleasant song. Praise you, then, His glorious name, Publish His exalted fame, Still His worth your praise exceeds Excellent are all His deeds."

Continue till you mount to Heaven to sing, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory forever and ever."

V. And now to conclude. The last point of the text is, WHAT STATE FOLLOWS PARDON. "They shall call every man his neighbor under the vine, and under the fig tree." Yes, wherever pardon comes, peace follows. In times of war the fig trees are cut down, the vines are destroyed. And if not, the inhabitants are kept within doors and often are driven into the eaves of the earth for shelter.

But the picture before us in the text represents the people as sitting at ease in their gardens and in their courtyards, where the luxuriant vines yield them shelter. The words admirably picture a scene of peace--each man under his vine and fig tree. I wonder why it is people cannot quote Scripture rightly in prayer, but there are very few who ever do. How often have I heard, "They shall sit every man under his vine and fig tree, none daring to make them afraid." I would like to

find that in the Bible!

The text in Micah is, "And none shall make them afraid." They dare do it, but they cannot do it. There is the point. They dare, but they cannot. The impudence of Satan is unlimited--he dares to do anything--but he cannot though he dares. Our text does not mention the fact, but it implies that no enemy can molest. A soul pardoned is a soul at peace. If God forgives me, nothing can distress me.

"Strike," said Luther, "strike, Lord, if You will, for now You have forgiven me I will bear Your strokes and sing." Oh, yes! If sin is pardoned, nothing can harm us. For us the poison is gone, the sting is departed, the evil is annihilated. We have in the pardon of sin an antidote for all that might have distressed us. We must and shall have peace.

But the text also implies neighborliness. They are not each one to sit under the vine, and under the fig tree, and say "Glory be to God I am a pardoned man, I am saved, I do not care about my neighbors one bit." No--he that is a gracious soul invites his neighbor, (for so it might run), invites him to commune with him! Grace is the most neighborly thing in the world. Christ's people are called sheep, sheep are gregarious--you do not meet sheep one by one--they go in flocks. They love company, good company.

So you shall find the people of God. They are good company-keeping people. I do not mean that they have great entertainments, and care for idle chit-chat--but this is how they are described--"Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard." Somebody said, "The good friends at the Tabernacle blocked up the steps a good deal after service by standing to talk with one another." Well, if you talk about Christ, and things Divine, the more you talk the better--of holy conversation there need be no limit.

If you talk against your neighbor, be home with you! If you talk gossip and scandal, you have no right to do it on the Tabernacle steps--no! Where have you a right to do it? No where! Gossiping slander is at all times vile, but if our conversation is of Jesus, then the more we speak together, and the more sociable we are, the more the House of God on earth becomes like Heaven above. God save us from a stiff gentility that knows nobody because it does not know itself. May we, on the other hand, rejoice in what God has done for us and all His people, and, therefore, make ourselves familiar with the consecrated brotherhood of saints.

Do not only sit under the fig tree, but call each man your neighbor. Say, "Rejoice with me! Come and help my joy, I cannot rejoice alone. Come and hear, all you that fear God, I will tell you what God has done for my soul." We will make even the heathen among whom we dwell to say, "The Lord has done great things for them." And we will say, "Yes, the Lord has done great things for us whereof we are glad." Christian sociability, Christian communion, Christian friend-

ship, Christian communication the one with the other is a most desirable and fitting thing--and where sin is pardoned and peace is implanted it is quite sure to follow.

But I must note again there is not only peace and neighborliness in the text, but there is comfort. They might sit, and they might sit together in misery--but in this case they sit in comfort under the vine, its broad leaves giving them shade. They sit under the fig tree, too, finding a cool retreat from the heat of the day. And oh, how Believers, when they meet together in communion, what comfort they have in the Holy Spirit! I could not help rejoicing today over a good Sister who has been away from here a long time.

She had had a deal of trouble, and I praised God when she said, "Oh,

but I should not have minded the trouble if I could have got to the Tabernacle on Sundays and weekdays, for there you could at least forget your troubles for an hour or two, and then go away strong to contend with them again." Yes, and when sitting under the shadow of Christ, under the leaves of His Truth, under the droppings of His familiar love, Christian fellowship becomes very sweet. One almost feels, when Jesus draws near to our assemblies, that if Heaven is better than this, it must be very good, indeed. We get such earnest anticipation of the joy of the glorified saints that we are fairly overcome with excessive delight!

But note, it was not only comfort they had, but substantial enjoyment and real supply of needs. They sat under the vine--then there was wine for them to drink. They sat under the fig tree--then there were figs for them to eat. So when God gives pardon and peace, He gives to our souls a satisfaction with good things. We find in Jesus Christ, if we sit under His shadow with delight, that His fruit is sweet unto our taste--

"All my capacious powers can wish In Christ do richly meet; Nor to my eyes is light so dear, Nor friendship half so sweet."

Now, my Beloved Friends--you that are unsaved and remain so. I can understand that you seek company and that you will go and call every man his neighbor, "Come, let us make mirth, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, let us break the Sabbath, let us break God's bands asunder, and cast His cords from us." I can understand that, and I think you also can understand that the company you keep on earth will be the company you will have to keep forever. "Bind them in bundles to burn them," will be the Lord's command. Like with like. They that depart from Christ on earth will hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed, forever." O that you might be led to seek God, and then to seek His

people!

But as for you that love God, I am sure if Grace is reigning in your hearts you will feel a yearning after holy company, and your company will be such as love what you love, such as hope to be with Jesus where you will be. "Oh, but God's people have many faults!" My dear Friend, so have you, but despite all the faults of the Church--

"My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains.
There may best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

There is no better company than the company that Christ keeps! There is no better house than the house that Christ inhabits. May we be willing to be doorkeepers in the House of God! May we, by God's Grace, be glad to be the least in the Church, so long as we may be numbered among the chosen, redeemed by the blood of Jesus! May the Lord give us perfect pardon, perfect peace, for His name's sake. Amen.

Chapter 46

A Most Needful Prayer Concerning The Holy Spirit

(No. 954)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Psalm 51:11.

THIS Psalm is beyond all others a photograph of penitent David. You have probably seen that interesting slab of stone which bears on its surface indications of the fall of raindrops in a primeval shower--this Psalm preserves the marks of David's teardrops for the inspection and instruction of succeeding generations. Or what if I change the figure and borrow another from an Oriental fable? They said of old that pearls were formed by drops of spring rain falling into shells upon the shores of the sea. So here, the drops of David's repentance are preserved in inspired Scripture as precious, priceless pearls.

This Psalm is as full of meaning as of tenderness. I know not how large a literature has gathered around it, but certainly writers of all creeds and ages have used their pens to illustrate it--and there is room for as many more. It is a perfectly inexhaustible Psalm. Its deep shaft of sorrowful humiliation leads to veins of golden ore. The stones of it are the place of sapphires.

We shall confine ourselves, this morning, to this one verse--not with any prospect of being able to bring out all its meaning, but rather hoping to make use of it--and to find produced in ourselves a measure of the feeling which it so solemnly expresses. If we should be made to drink into its spirit, and then to pour out our hearts at the feet of

our Redeemer, it will be an unspeakable blessing. We shall use the text, first, in its evident sense as the utterance of a penitent saint. Secondly, we shall employ it, as I think it may be used, as the cry of an anxious Church. And then, thirdly, but in a very modified sense, we shall put it into the mouths of awakened, but as yet unsaved souls.

I. First, then, in its largest, widest, and primitive sense, we must regard this verse as THE CRY OF A PENITENT CHILD OF GOD. "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me." This will certainly be fit language for any child of God here who has fallen into gross sin. I trust, my Brothers and Sisters, this may not be your case, but if it should be, hesitate not when you have fallen into David's sin, if you feel David's repentance, to offer David's prayer, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me."

Backsliding Christian, you may yet return--there are pardons for sins of deepest dye. The Lord will heal your broken bones, and restore unto you the joy of His salvation. But probably far more of us will have an equal necessity to utter this supplication on account of gradual inward backsliding from the former closeness of our walk with God. One great sin, when committed, startles the soul into repentance.

But a continuation of sin will be found to be even more dangerous. Though no one of the company of our transgressions may be a peculiarly striking iniquity, yet the whole together may produce an equally lamentable result upon the soul. White ants will devour a carcass as surely and as speedily as a lion. Many threads of silk twisted together may hold a man as fast as one band of iron.

Come, let us consider. Many of us have been saved by Divine Grace, and not barely saved, but we have been made to walk in the light of God's Countenance. We have been somewhat like Daniel, men greatly beloved and

highly favored. Now, have we acted in conformity with such distinguishing mercy? Have we manifested a holy jealousy such as Divine love ought to produce in us? Must not some here confess that their love has by degrees grown cold, or at least lukewarm? Must not many of us acknowledge that we have been very carnal, so as to have been overjoyed with worldly prosperity, or overly dampened with worldly adversity? Must we not acknowledge, many of us, that we have been slothful in the Master's service? Are there not some among you who for the last few months have done little or nothing for the Church and Truth of Christ? You were once diligent in your Master's business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. But that has gone--your former zeal and fidelity have departed from you--unstable as water, you do not now excel. With this there has crept over some hearts a listlessness in prayer, a want of enjoyment in reading the Word, a deadness towards spiritual things, a carelessness of walk, a carnal security of spirit. Dr. Watts' verse might suit some of you sadly well--

"In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise.
Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies."

Now, in such a case, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are conscious of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. If you are obliged to confess that the former days were better than now, and to admit that the consolations of the Lord are small with you--I do, in deep and anxious sympathy with your condition--exhort you to use from your heart the language of the Psalmist, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me."

You will perceive that a soul which can really pray thus has life--true

spiritual life--still struggling within. An ungodly man does not ask that he may abide in nearness to God. Rather, he would say, "Where shall I flee from Your Presence?" He does not seek for God's Spirit. He is quite content that the evil spirit should rule him, and that the spirit of this world should be predominant in him.

But here is life, struggling, panting, crushed, painful life--but life for all that. The higher spiritual life which sighs after God. I have seen in the corner of the garden a little fire covered up with many damp autumn leaves. I have watched its feeble smoke, and known thereby that the fire still lived and was fighting with the damp which almost smothered it. So, here, these desires and sighs and cries are as so much smoke, indicating the Divine fire within. "Cast me not away from Your Presence," shows a soul that loves God's Presence. "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me," reveals a heart that desires to be under the dominion of that Spirit yet more completely.

Here are signs of life, though they may appear to be as indistinct and doleful as hollow groans far underground-- such as have been heard from men buried alive--voices from the sepulcher, choked and ghostly, but telling of life in the charnel house, grappling with death, and crying out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Let us look at these words closely, since I have shown you how applicable they are to us, and how they indicate spiritual life. I think when David used them, he may have looked back in his mind to that portion of sacred history with which he was conversant.

He remembered when Adam and Eve, having rebelled against their Maker, were driven out from God's Presence, when the cherubim with flaming sword blocked the gate of Eden's blighted garden. "My God," he seems to say, "I, too, have offended. Your Presence is my Paradise, my Eden, all else is wilderness to me--barren, thorn-bearing wilderness. O drive me

not out! Cast me not away from Your Presence! Let me but know You love me and I shall be in Eden. Let me but know that I am still Your child, Your favored one, and I will find in that sweet assurance my Paradise, my all. Let me be a courtier in Your palace, or even a doorkeeper in Your house, and I will be content. "But from Your Presence banish me not, else do You wither all my joys."

Did he think of Cain, too, and was his mind so distressed that he was half afraid lest he should become like that marked man who went out from the Presence of the Lord to be a wanderer and a vagabond, and find from then on no rest for the sole of his feet? Did he feel that if he were exiled from God's Presence he would be just as wretched as the accursed Cain, himself? Did the thought of that first manslayer put an emphasis into the prayer, "Cast me not away from Your Presence"?

Do you think he remembered Pharaoh, too, in that memorable night when the cloud that imaged the Presence of Jehovah came down between Israel and Egypt, and the dark side of it was towards Pharaoh? For God indignantly turned His back upon the haughty king, while His face shone lovingly upon His chosen, but afflicted people. Did he mean by our text to say, "Lord, turn not Your back on me. Cause not such trouble and confusion in my soul as ensued in Egypt's hosts when the night of Your wrath fell on it. O cast me not away from Your Presence"?

Is it possible that the penitent monarch, while penning this Psalm, thought of Samson, too, and therefore uttered the latter part of the verse, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me"? Did he remember the strongman who could tear a lion as though it were a kid when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, or smite the Philistines hip and thigh till he piled them

up in heaps when God was with him--but who, when his locks had been shorn, and the Spirit was gone--was ignomini-ously bound, and with

blinded eyes was made to do a mill horse's work?

Did he think of the hero of Gaza and say, "My God, take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Leave me not to be the sport of my enemies. Cast me not off as one whom You can no longer employ for high and honorable service. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me"? Or is it not very likely that if he thought of all these, yet his eyes were peculiarly fixed upon one between whom and himself there had been a very close relation? I mean Saul, his predecessor on the throne. That man had been chosen to rule God's people Israel, but he proved rebellious, and he was cast away from God's Presence, so that God would not hear him in the hour of distress.

No Urim and Thummim would give him a Divine response. No Prophet would regard him. No priest could present for him acceptable sacrifices. He was cast away from God's Presence, and the Spirit was finally gone from him. Even that ordinary measure of the Spirit which he had once enjoyed was gone. Saul was once among the Prophets, but we find him by-and-by among the witches. Saul had lost all prudence in the council chamber, all success in the battlefield. The voice of Him by whom kings reign had gone forth against him, and broken his scepter.

"Because you have rejected the Word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king." All this David remembered with a shudder, and his heart said to him, "What? Shall the son of Jesse be like the son of Kish? Shall the second anointed of Samuel be like the first, of whom the Lord said, 'It repents Me that I have set up Saul to be king' "? He became overwhelmed with dreadful apprehension and turned to the Lord with a bitter cry, "Oh, can it be, my God? Shall I also be cast away from Your Presence, and Your Spirit taken from me?" He bows himself in agonizing prayer with this as his petition, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me."

Give me your patient attention, you who love the Lord, while I try to give you many reasons why such a prayer as this should arise out of the depths of your hearts, and leap from your lips. As for the first petition of the text, "Cast me not away from Your Presence," my Brethren, we have need to present it, for God's Presence is to us our comfort amid affliction. He is "a very present help in trouble." It is our greatest delight--of all our true joys it is the source and sum. We call Him by that name, "God our exceeding joy."

The Lord's Presence is our strength. God with us is our banner of victory. When He is not with us we are weaker than water, but in His might we are Omnipotent. His Presence is our sanctification. By beholding the Glory of the Lord we become like He. Communion with God has a transforming power upon us. This, too, is our highest glory--angels have no brighter honor. And this shall be our Heaven hereafter--to dwell in the immediate and unveiled Presence of the Lord in His own Palace forever.

I cannot, however, dwell at length on this first part of the text, and therefore I have summarized the reasons for its use. But the second I shall ask your attention to in greater detail. "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Remember, my Brethren, it was the Holy Spirit who first of all regenerated us. If we have, indeed, been born again from above, our new birth was by the Holy Spirit. "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," are we made this day spiritual men. If, therefore, we have not the Spirit, or it is possible that the Spirit is taken from us, the very essence of our spiritual life is gone. We are utterly dead, we are no longer numbered with the living people of the living

God.

The Holy Spirit is not to us a luxury, but a necessity. We must have

the Spirit of God or we live not at all in a spiritual sense. If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. Without the supernatural work of this Divine Person upon our nature we are not numbered with the family of God at all. Remember, my dear Friends, that into the Holy Spirit you and I, when we professed our faith in Jesus, were baptized. We were immersed "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And this day, without the Holy Spirit, you and I are fraudulent professors, baptized deceivers, and arrant hypocrites.

If we were not, indeed, baptized into the Holy Spirit, how dare we be baptized into the outward symbol? As he who, if an unworthy communicant, eats and drinks condemnation to himself, even so does the unworthy participant in Baptism. This day we are bearing a false profession, we wear a fictitious name, we are as those who said they were Jews and were not, but did lie. We number ourselves with the people of God, but if we have not the Spirit we shall at last be numbered with the castaways. See to this, I pray you, and O may the preacher see to this himself!

Remember, too, that the Spirit of God is to each one of us the Spirit of adoption. "You have not received," says the Apostle, "the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Without the Spirit of God, then, we have no Spirit of adoption. We have lost that best of all blessings, the son-ship, which places us in possession of all the treasures of Heaven as joint-heirs with Christ.

In the wilderness it was the sonship of our Lord which Satan assaulted when he tempted the Savior. "If You are the Son of God," said he. Christ the Lord, however, stood fast upon this point and was not moved--and therefore He conquered. Let anything come between us and the

distinct recognition of our sonship towards God and we are undone.

Lord, if it so pleases You, suffer Satan to rob me of all my goods, as Job was deprived of all his treasures. And let the desire of my eyes be taken from me, and my eyes, themselves, no more behold the sweet light of day.

But "take not Your Holy Spirit from me," for then my very relation to You would vanish from my heart. While I can say, "My God, my Father," I have enough, though all else is gone. But if You are no Father to me, or I have no Spirit of adoption towards You, then I am undone, indeed.

"Take not Your Holy Spirit from me," is a necessary prayer, for to do so would be to end our spiritual life, to cast us out as mere pretenders, to treat us as trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots.

Further, let us not forget that it is by the Holy Spirit that we have access to God. "We have access by one Spirit unto the Father," says the Apostle. Now, access to God is among the richest of our privileges. Let a man be able to take his burdens to God and it little matters how heavy they may be. Let him be able to tell his needs to his Father, and it little signifies how great those needs may be, for God will supply them all according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. But take away the Mercy Seat, or block up the road by which the Believer reaches it. Withdraw his power in prayer, and his faith in the promise--and all this you do if you take away the Holy Spirit from him--then is the Believer ruined, indeed.

Praying in the Holy Spirit is the only true praying. O may we never cease from it! "He helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Without His teaching, then, what stammering prayers, what wandering prayers, what prayers that are not prayers at all we should offer! We must have the Spirit or else our great resource and remedy of prayer becomes unavailable. On your knees,

then, you that have wandered and deserve to be forsaken and deserted of the Holy Spirit! I beseech you cry mightily, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me," and let your plea be in the name and merit of Christ Jesus the Savior.

Moreover, Brethren, the Holy Spirit is our great Instructor. In these times, when errorists of all kinds are anxious to mislead us, some from the side of credulity, and others from the side of skepticism, we have need to pray every day, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." One says, "Lo, here!" Another, with equal vehemence, cries, "Lo, there!" We have not only, "another gospel," but we have fifty other gospels now preached. Though there is but one foundation and one salvation, yet there are those among us who proclaim with earnestness this, and that, and other doctrines as fundamental, though their teaching is of the flesh, and not of God.

The young and unwary must often have cause, in great bewilderment, to enquire, "How shall I know the Truth? By what means shall I discern the way?" Now, the Spirit of God is given to "lead us into all Truth," and reverently sought, He will be given to all who lack wisdom--to teach them the things of Christ, by taking those precious things and revealing them unto their hearts.

But oh, without the Holy Spirit our patient and Infallible Teacher, we should be like a child in the woods when the sun has gone down, wandering here and there, torn with briers and fearful of the wolf, crying in the dark for its father. Or like a traveler lost on one of our southern downs, surrounded by a clinging mist, not knowing which way he goes, and in constant danger of falling from some lofty cliff into the sea. "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me." You puzzled and bewildered children of God, here is a prayer for you--and God fulfill it to you according to His infinite mercy.

Again, I pray that I may be helped to magnify the Holy Spirit in your esteem, making you to love Him and worship Him more than ever. Dear Brethren, we want the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. This is one of His names, the Paraclete, the Comforter. He has come on purpose to appease the griefs of His children, and bring peace into their minds. Now, whatever our troubles may be, if we have such a Comforter, we can afford to welcome them.

Our adversities may be innumerable, but with the Holy Spirit's Presence, we rise above them all. But, O my God, if the Comforter is gone, then my brain reels, my spirit sinks, I give up the conflict, I cannot endure to the end--for only by His consolations shall I in patience possess my soul.

Though I might enlarge, I must not, for time reproves me. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier, and when we feel sin raging within, how can we hope to conquer without His aid? If He should leave us, if He who began the work does not keep His hand to it, how will it ever be complete? Holiness is too Divine a work to be worked in us by any inferior hand. He who made the first rough draft must put in the perfecting stroke, or all will remain incomplete.

And He, also, is our power for practical service--the "power from on high" for which Apostles tarried of old. If the Holy Spirit is not with the preacher, vain are his pleadings with men. If He is not with the teacher in his class, with any worker for God--what is their labor but beating the air, or reasoning with the waves? If no other person can pray this prayer from his inmost soul, at least the preacher can.

It rises up, as the Lord knows, from the very center of my heart. I dread beyond all things the Spirit's withdrawal. Death has not half the terror of that thought. I would sooner die a thousand times than lose the helpful Presence of the Holy Spirit. I will just one moment allude

to a controversy which has raged around this text, and then pass on. Some have said, "Then a true saint may be cast away, lose the Spirit of God, and perish." The argument being that there is no need for a man to pray for that which God is sure to give, or pray against an evil which God will never inflict.

The answer is briefly this--I should not dare to pray, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me," if I had not the promise that He will not cast me away from His Presence, nor take His Holy Spirit from me. Instead of it not being right to pray for what God will give, I venture to say it is not right to pray for what God will not give. The promise is not a reason for not praying, but the very best reason in all the world for praying. Because I earnestly believe that no real child of God will ever be cast away from God's Presence, therefore I pray that I may not be.

And because I am well persuaded that from no really regenerated soul will God ever utterly take His Spirit, therefore, for that reason above all others do I pray that He may never take His Spirit from me. I say, again, it is absurd to argue that a thing which God promises to give is not to be asked for, for has He not Himself said, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them"? The fact that the continuance of the Holy Spirit is the subject of an inspired prayer rather strengthens, than weakens the certainty of the promised blessing.

Moreover, be it remembered, that God may partially take away His Presence and His Spirit, and yet, after all, never remove His everlasting and eternal love from that person. For He may only withdraw for a season, for wise reasons, to return again afterwards with fullness of Grace. Against this partial desertion we are, however, allowed and encouraged to pray. Once again, remember that when a man

has sinned, as David did, and is bowed down as David was, he cannot always pray in language which would be precisely suitable for a well-assured saint.

He has doubts as to whether he is saved, and therefore he does well to pray on the lowest ground as though he were not surely a saint, but might prove an apostate after all. It is most natural for a backslider to use expressions implying the very worst, expressions rather of fear than confidence, rather of distress than repose. David cries like Jonah out of the belly of Hell, "Cast me not away from Your Presence."

The lower down we get, the better. I frequently find that I cannot pray as a minister. I find that I cannot sometimes pray as an assured Christian, but I bless God I can pray as a sinner. I begin again with, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and by degrees rise up again to faith, and onward to assurance. When assurance is gone, and faith is weak, it is a great comfort that we may pray a sinner's prayer--the words of which may be inaccurate as to our actual condition, but correctly describe our doubts and fears, and supposed condition.

II. But now I shall pass on to take these words and use them as THE VOICE OF AN ANXIOUS CHURCH. The true Church of God may well pray, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Brethren, I shall speak pointedly to this Church, over which the Holy Spirit has made me an overseer. Let us, my dear Brethren, remember that there have been Churches of old which God has cast away from His Presence.

Where are the Churches of Asia that were once like golden candlesticks? Where are Sardis, Thyatira and Laodicea? Can you find so much as a relic of them? Are not their places empty, void and waste? Look at the Church of Rome, once a martyr Church, valiant for the Truth of God, and strong in the Lord--now the very personification of Antichrist, and

utterly gone aside to the worship of images and all manner of idolatries--an apostate and defiled thing, and no more a Church of Christ at all.

Now, what has happened to other Churches may happen to this Church and we ought to be very earnestly on our guard lest so it should be. In your own time you yourselves have seen Churches flourishing, multiplying, walking in peace and love. But for some reason not known to us but perceived by the Watcher who jealously surveys the Churches of God, a root of bitterness has sprung up, divisions have devoured them, heresy has poisoned them, and the place that once gloried in them scarcely knows them now. Existing they may be, but little more--dwindling in numbers, barren of Divine Grace--they are rather an encumbrance than power for good.

Remember, then, Beloved, that the power of any Church for good depends on the Presence of God, and that sin in the Church may grieve the Lord so that He may no more frequent her courts, or go forth with her armies. It is a dire calamity for a Church when the Lord refuses any longer to bless her work, or reveal Himself in her ordinances. Then is she driven of the wind here and there like a boat derelict and castaway. The Lord may, because of sin, take away His Holy Spirit from a Church. The spirit of love may depart, the spirit of prayer may cease, the spirit of zeal and earnestness may be removed, and the Spirit which converts the souls of men may display His power elsewhere, but not in the once-favored congregation. Let me impress upon you that all this may readily happen if we grieve the Holy Spirit as some Churches have done.

My Beloved, let me refresh your memories with the recollection that the great power of the Church does not lie in the power of her organizations. You may have good schemes for work wisely arranged and

managed, but they will be a failure without the Divine energy. Too often excellent methods are rigidly adhered to, and confidently relied upon, and yet, without the Holy Spirit they are sheer folly.

We are told that in unhappy Paris, when first the mails were stopped, the drivers of the mail carts took their seats upon their boxes and sat there, though no horses were forthcoming. Red tape commands as much reverence as the magic cord of the Brahmins. Formal routine satisfies many. Preachers, deacons, and teachers sit on the boxes of their mail coaches for the appointed time, but the power which moves the whole is too much forgotten, and in some cases ignored.

Souls are not saved by systems, but by the Spirit. Organizations without the Holy Spirit are windmills without wind. Methods and arrangements without Divine Grace are pipes from a dry conduit, lamps without oil. Even the most Scriptural forms of Church government and effort are null and void without the "power from on High."

Remember, too, that the power of the Church does not lie in her gifts. You might, every one of you, have all wisdom and be able to understand all mysteries. We might all speak with tongues and be numbered among the eloquent of the earth--but our Church might not flourish for all this. Gifts glitter, but are not always gold. Gifts may puff up, but they cannot build up if the Holy Spirit is not there.

Strife and divisions, emulations and jealousies are, through the evil of our nature, the very frequent consequences of the possession of great talents by a Church--and these things are unmingled evils. Nor does the power of the Church consist in her wealth. When the Spirit is with her, sufficient treasure is laid at her feet, and the "daughter of Tyre is there with a gift." But if the Spirit of God is gone, we might say of all the money that was ever poured into ecclesiastical coffers by those who sought to strengthen her, "Your money perish with you!"

Gold avails nothing to a Church devoid of Divine Grace, it does but increase the evil which is corrupting within. O you vainglorious Churches--you may gild your domes, you may make your pillars of alabaster, and cover your altars with precious stones--you may clothe your priests in scarlet and in fair white linen, you may make your ceremonies imposing, your processions gorgeous, and your music enchanting--but all this avails nothing if the Spirit of God is gone! All that remains for you is as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.

Nor, and here let me press this upon you, does the strength of a Church lie merely in her doctrines. I know not that Laodicea held false doctrines, yet was she nauseous to the Lord. Orthodox Churches may become lifeless corpses. Truth may be held in unrighteousness. Creeds most accurate may be but the cerements in which a dead Church is wrapped to be carried to her burial. Men have had sound views of the Truth of God, and yet have been unsound in life, and sound in nothing else but in the sleep of carelessness.

Nor does the strength of a Church lie in her numbers. Congratulate yourselves that your membership is counted by thousands, but if you become a mob and not an army, or an army without a Divine Leader, and without the enthusiasm which only the present Spirit of God can give--what are your numbers but the source of difficulty, corruption, and failure? You are like so many grains of sand that cannot unite. You are altogether broken, and poured out like water if the Spirit is gone. What availed the number of the Scribes and priests of old when God had left them to their own blindness? What can the largest flock of sheep do without a shepherd? What is a large Church without the Lord's Presence but a mass of chaff to be scattered with a whirlwind, or to rot on the threshing floor? So, too, is it with the past history and the prestige of a Church. It is vain to depend on these. There is far

too great an attitude among us to fall back on what our fathers did, or what we ourselves achieved ten or twenty years ago. My word to you, my dearly Beloved Church, is, "Hold fast that which you have, that no man take your crown."

Our crown as a Church has been this--we have been a soul-winning Church. We have had nothing else whereof to boast, but this is our claim--we have sought the souls of men, and God has given them to us. To Him be all the glory. Shall we lose that crown through slackness and lukewarmness? It must be so unless we cry again and again, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from us." The Holy Spirit we want to abide with us in all the excellency of His glorious power. And if we have Him not, woe is the day. Our Shiloh shall become a desolation, and this beautiful house of our assembling shall become a hissing and a reproach.

Brethren, I will use an image which will come home to your minds at once. Any Church of God from which the Spirit has departed becomes very much like that great empire with whose military glory the world was dazzled, and whose strength made the nations tremble. France, mistress of arms, queen of beauty, arbiter of politics--how soon has she fallen! I have heard many reasons given for her sudden overthrow, but I scarcely believe any of them to be sufficient to account for such a fall.

In an hour, like a lily broken at the stalk, she has withered. On a sudden, as though the hand of God had gone out against her, her glory has departed. Why was it? I do not believe that it was any lack of courage in her soldiery, nor do I even think that there was more than usual deficiency of skill in her commanders. Her hour had come, she was weighed in the balances and found wanting, and her prowess failed her as in a moment. The nation once so great now lies bleeding at her victor's feet, pitied of us all, none the less, because her folly

continues the useless fight.

Just so have we seen it in Churches. May we never so see it here. Everybody may be saying, "How wondrously that Church flourishes! What power! What influence! What numbers!" And on a sudden some radical evil which had been eating out the very soul of the Church may come to its issue--and then, as in a moment, all the apparent prosperity will subside--and the Philistines will rejoice. May it not be so! May our prayer be, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from us."

Travelers in Egypt point to spots where once grew luxurious vegetation when the soil was constantly irrigated by the rich stream of the Nile. But now the irrigation, having ceased, the sand of the Libyan desert has conquered the fertile ground and annexed it to the wilderness. After this sort, Churches irrigated by the Spirit once produced rich harvests of souls--left of the Spirit the sand of the world has covered them--and where once all was green and beautiful there is nothing but the former howling wilderness.

It awakens melancholy reflections when we hear of the bodies of old Egyptian kings, proud lords of millions of men, dragged by our discoverers out of their secret chambers in the pyramids and exposed to every vulgar eye. The great sarcophagus has had its lid uplifted, and the monarch who once ruled the world has been taken out and his corpse unrolled for the sake of a little old linen, and an ounce or two of the embalming gum. Poor mummy! Once a Pharaoh whose voice could shake a nation and devastate continents--now used to heat an Arab's kettle or to furnish an object for a museum.

So with a Church--alive by the Divine indwelling--God gives it royalty and makes it a king and priest unto Himself among the sons of men. Its influence is felt further than it dreams. The world trembles at it, for it is fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with

banners. But when the Spirit of God is departed, all that remains is its old records, ancient creeds, title-deeds, traditions, histories and memories!

It is in fact a mummy of a Church rather than a Church of God, and it is better fitted to be looked at by antiquarians than to be treated as an existent agency. May we never come to this! May the Tabernacle abide in prosperity till the Temple of God shall be among men. Let our whole Church lift up the prayer, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me."

III. But time outruns me, and therefore I must close by regarding this as THE CRY OF AN AWAKENED SINNER. Not properly, nor accurately, but still instructively I may use it. O unconverted Man, if you are, indeed, anxious about your soul, pray this prayer, "Cast me not away from Your Presence. And take not Your Holy Spirit from me." Say you thus to the Lord, "O You most merciful God, pronounce not yet that word, 'Depart, you cursed.' My God, cast me not away as reprobate. "Let Your longsuffering spare me a little longer, till Your Grace has saved me. Let me still stand on praying ground and pleading terms with You! 'Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.' It is true I have not Your Spirit as I gladly would have it, but still I hear Your Word. O let me not be denied the hearing of Your Gospel which by Your Grace may bless my soul. Still have I Your Holy Book, and Your Spirit's voice is heard there--may it lead me to Jesus. O take not away Your Book from me! Shut me not up in Hell, where I shall feel the threats, but never know the promises of Your Word.

"Sometimes Your Spirit touches my conscience--hard as my heart is--it sometimes trembles. Sometimes I feel myself inclined to love You if I could. I feel some sighing and yearning after You. Take not these beginnings of Grace from me. O God, I wait upon You in the hearing of

Your Word, and sometimes I hope Your power, Your life, will come to me, and I, even I, the chief of sinners, shall yet be saved. O take not away that hope utterly and forever. Swear not in Your anger that I shall never enter into Your rest, but rather turn Your pitying eyes on me and break my heart this day, and bind it up with the dear Savior's love. Save me, O save me, with Your great salvation, for the sake of Jesus, Your Son."

Have you prayed that prayer, dear Hearer? It shall be heard. But hear what God speaks to you--it is this--"Believe you now this day, and trust in Jesus and you shall be saved." Come now and put yourself before the Cross. Trust yourself for time and for eternity in His dear hands, who there poured out His soul unto death for sinners. Then shall you know without a doubt that He will never cast you away from His Presence!

"Him that comes to Me," says Jesus, "I will in no wise cast out." Then shall you know that the Spirit shall not be taken from you, for He is with them that believe, and He shall abide in them forever. God bless you, every one of you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 47

A Singular But Needful Question

(No. 955)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1870,

BY C H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Will you be made whole?" John 5:6.

JESUS spoke to the impotent man who had been afflicted for thirty-eight years, and enquired of him, "Will you be made whole?" It seems a very strange question to ask. Who would not be made whole? Would the poor man have been lying at the pool if he had not been anxious for healing? Must there not have been in the very look of his face, as he gazed upon the Savior, an answer to that question, superseding all necessity of saying it? Yet as our Lord spoke no superfluous words, it may be that He perceived that the paralysis of the man's body had, to a very painful degree, benumbed his mind and brought on a paralysis of his will.

He had hoped till his heart was sick. He had waited till despondency had dried up his spirits. And now it had almost come to this, that he scarcely cared whether he was made whole or not. The bow had been bent so long that all its elasticity was destroyed. He had hungered till appetite, itself, was gone. He was now listless, with an indifference made up of sullen repining at his disappointments and blank hopelessness for the future. The Savior touched a chord which needed to vibrate when He enquired as to his will. He aroused, by that question, a dormant faculty whose vigorous exercise, it may be, was one of the first essentials to a cure. "Will you be made whole?" was the enquiry of a profound investigation, the scientific probe of a great Physician,

the resurrection from the grave of a great master power of manhood.

Now, in the matter of preaching the Gospel today, it may seem almost an impertinent question for me to put to each one of you gathered here who as yet are not saved, "Will you be made whole?" "Surely," you will reply, "everyone desires salvation." Believe me, I am not quite so certain as you are of the truth of that statement. "But our being here," says one, "our having been here so long, and our attentive listening to the Gospel go to prove that we are willing enough to be made whole if we could but discover where health is to be found, and what is that balm of Gilead of which so much is said."

And yet I should not wonder if there are many here who through having waited so long are beginning to be paralyzed in their once earnest desires. And others, who having been here so long and never having been very anxious, at last have come to occupy these pews as a mere matter of custom--they have no hearty will towards the wholeness of soul which the Good Physician is always prepared to give to those who seek His help. I am persuaded that instead of the question being an unnecessary one, it is in every congregation one of the first to be pressed upon the hearer's attention.

To get a truthful answer to this enquiry from the inmost soul of every hearer is my object now, believing that it will be a very healthful thing to you--even if you are honestly compelled to give a negative answer. It will at least expose the condition of the heart to itself, and that may be helpful towards something better. As God may help me, I shall labor to press upon you very earnestly this question this morning, O unsaved Man or Woman, "Will you be made whole?"

I. This question is necessary to be put, in the first place, because IT IS A QUESTION NOT ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD. It is not the same as this

question, "Will you be saved from going to Hell?" Everyone answers, "Yes," to that. "Will you be saved so as to go to Heaven?" At once, without deliberation, everyone says, "Yes." For the harps of gold, for the songs of blessedness, for the eternity of immortality--we have all a heart and a strong desire--but that, you see, is not the question. Heaven and its joys come out of what is proposed in our question, as a result, as a consequence--but that is not the matter in hand just now. We are not now saying to the thief, "Will you have your imprisonment remitted?" We are putting it to him in another shape--"Are you willing to be made an honest man?" We are not now saying to the murderer, "Are you anxious to escape the gallows?" We know his reply. The question we are putting to him is, "Will you be made righteous, upright, kind, forgiving, so as to give up all this evil of yours?"

It is not, "Are you willing to sit at the festival of mercy, and eat and drink as those do who are in health?" But, "Are you, yourself, willing to be made spiritually healthful, to pass through those Divine processes by which the foul disease of sin may be cast out, and the healthiness of sanctified manhood may be restored to you?"

To help you to know what that question means, let me remind you that there never were but two men who were whole, perfectly whole. And those may be called the two Adams--the first and the Second Adam. These both showed us in their own persons what a man would be if he were whole. The first Adam in the garden--we should all be willing to be in Paradise with him! We should all be delighted to walk beneath those never-withering boughs, and gather ever-luscious fruits, without toil, without suffering, without disease, without death.

We all should be glad enough to welcome the return of the primeval gladness of Eden, but that is not the question. It is, should we be willing to be made mentally and morally what Adam was before his sin

brought disease into manhood? And what was Adam? Why, he was a man who knew his God, knew many things beside, but mainly and chiefly knew his God. His delight was to walk with God, to commune with Him, to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend-- until he fell he was one whose will was submitted to the will of his Creator, anxious and desirous not to violate that will, but in all things to do what his Lord should bid him.

He was placed in the garden to till the ground, to keep and dress the garden, and he did all that with joy. He was a whole, a sound man. His whole enjoyment consisted in his God. It was his one object as a living creature to do the will of Him that made him. He knew nothing of rioting and drunkenness. For him there were no lascivious songs or wanton deeds. The flash of debauchery and the glitter of profligacy were far from him. He was pure, upright, chaste, obedient. How would you like to be made like he, Sinner--you who are doing your own will--you who have sought out many inventions? You who find happiness in this sin and the other filthiness, would you be willing to come back and find your happiness in your God, and from now on serve Him, and none beside?

Ah, perhaps you say, blindly, "Yes," and it is possible you know not what you say. If the truth were more clearly before you, you would obstinately refuse to be made whole. Life would, under such an aspect, seem to you tame, joyless, slavish. Without the fire of lust, the excitement of drink, the laughter of folly, and the pomp of pride, what would existence be to many? To them our ideal of sound manhood is but another name for bondage and misery.

Take the other instance of a Man who was whole. It was Jesus, the Second Adam. Dwelling here among the sons of men, not in a Paradise, but in the midst of obloquy, temptation, and suffering, yet was He a

whole, sound Man. Sicknesses He took upon Himself, as to His body--and our sins were reckoned to Him as our Substitute. But in Him was no sin. The prince of this world searched Him through and through, but could find no unsoundness in Him. The perfection of our Savior's manhood consisted in this--that He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

He was holy, that is, in its root, the same thing as "whole." He was a complete, perfect, uninjured, untainted Man. He was whole towards His God. It was His meat and drink to do the will of God that sent Him.

Jesus as Man was man as God would have man--perfectly conformed to His right position. He was as He came from the Maker's hand, without blot, without loss, without excrescence of evil, and without the absence of any good thing. He was whole and holy. Therefore he was harmless, never inflicting ill on others in word or deed.

He was undefiled, never affected by the influences that surrounded Him so as to become false to His God or unkind to man. He was undefiled, though blasphemy passed through or by His ear, yet it never polluted His heart. Though He saw the lust and wickedness of man carried to its climax, yet He Himself shook off the viper into the fire and remained without spot, and blameless. He was also separate from sinners, not drawing around Him a Pharisaic cordon, and saying, "Stand by, for I am holier than you," but eating with them and yet separate from them.

And never more separate than when His benignant hand touched them, and when He entered most deeply into sympathy with them in their sorrows. He was separate by His own mental elevation, moral superiority, and spiritual grandeur. Now, would you wish to be like Jesus?

There is a question. Probably if you were, it would involve in you much of His experience. You would be laughed at, you would be scoffed. You, too, would be persecuted, and unless Providence restrained your foe,

you also might be brought to death. But taking Christ for All and All--would you be willing to be made like He--to have torn away from yourself much real evil which you now admire, and to have implanted in you much real good, which perhaps at this moment you do not appreciate? Would you be willing now to be made whole?

I can imagine that you say, "I want to be like Jesus, I anxiously desire it," and yet permit me gently and affectionately to whisper in your ear that if you knew what I meant, if you knew what Jesus was, I am not so sure that your will would very vehemently incline that way. I am afraid that many a struggle, and many a rebellion would arise in your heart if the process were being carried on towards making you whole as Jesus Christ was whole.

Still further, to illustrate the meaning of the question, "Will you be made whole?" let me remind you that when a man is whole, complete, and what a man should be, there are certain evil propensities which are expelled, and certain moral qualities which he is sure to possess. For instance, if a man is made whole before God he is made honest before men. No man can be said to be whole while he is still guilty of injustice in his trading, in his thinking, in his conversation, or in his actions towards his neighbors.

Sinner, you have been in the habit of perpetrating in your business much that would not stand the tests of God's all-searching eye. You often say in your trading things that are not true. You excuse them by the assertion that others do the same. I am not here to listen to your excuse, but I am about to ask you earnestly, "Will you be made whole?" Are you desirous to be made from this time a thoroughly, strictly, punctiliously honest man? No more lying puffs! No more exaggerations! No more overreaching, and taking of advantage! Come now, what do you think of this state of things?

Why, there are some who could not carry on their business at this rate--"the trade is rotten, and if you do not fall into its practices you cannot make a living! The district is low and beggarly, and none can thrive in it but cheats. We should have to shut up the shop if we were perfectly honest." "Why," cries one, "I should be eaten up alive in this age of competition. I cannot believe that we are to be so excessively conscientious." I see how it is, you do not want to be made whole.

He who is quite whole becomes in all respects a sober man. "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man. But that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man." And, "the kingdom of God stands not in meats or drinks," yet still both in meat and drink men do frequently sin, and especially in the sin of drunkenness. Now I suppose there is no drunkard but what at least, when he is sober, anxiously desires to be saved. But Drunkard, understand the question, it is not this--would you go to Heaven? But this--would you give up your drunkenness, and no longer delight yourself in those cups of excess? Now what do you say? Would you, from this moment, have done with all this rioting and wantonness, and cast them all away? Perhaps in the morning some would say, "Yes," when the eyes are red, and the woe of excess is on them. But how about the eventide when the merry company surrounds the man, and the wine sparkles in the cup? Would he, then, be made whole, and renounce that which ruins his body and his soul? Ah, no. Many say, "Yes, I would be made whole," but they do not mean it. They are like the dog that returns to its vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

To be made whole involves in a man the production of universal truthfulness. Now, there are persons who cannot stand to speak the truth. To them two must always be twenty. To their eyesight the faults

of any neighbor are crimes, and the virtues of any, except their special favorites, are always tinged with vice. Naturally they have a malicious judgment towards others. They are envious of anything that is honorable in their fellow man. Now, what do you say, Sir? Are you willing to be made whole and from this hour to speak nothing but the truth towards God and towards man? I am afraid many a tongue that is glib now would have little to say if it said nothing but truth. And many a man might, and would, if he were honest enough to say it, refuse the benediction of being made perfectly truthful.

So in the matter of forgiveness. A man who is made whole can forgive even to seventy times seven. When you cannot forgive an injury, it is because your soul is sick. When a wrong is resented strongly, you are ill for the moment. When it is resisted constantly, you have a chronic disease upon you. Some persons are so far from wishing to know how to forgive that they would almost pray that they might live and die to gratify the passion of revenge. They would follow the man who has done them an injury through this world and the other, too, and be damned with him if they might have the satisfaction of seeing him amidst the flames.

Sweet is revenge to many men, and it is useless for a man to say, "I would be made whole," while he still cultivates malice, and bears ill-will towards his fellow man. I might thus pass over one after another of the virtues and the vices, and show that my text is not quite such a simple question, after all, as some people think. There are some men who are afflicted with a miserly, grasping disposition. If they were whole they would be generous, they would be kind to the poor, they would be ready to give of their substance to the Lord's work.

But would they be made whole if it were left to their choice this morning? Ah, no. They think generosity to be weakness and charity sheer

folly. "What is the good of having money and giving it away?" they say. "What can be the good of getting it but to hold it?" And, "He is the wise man who can hold it fastest and part with as little of it as may be." The man does not want to be made whole, Sir. He counts his paralyzed hand and ossified heart to be the marks of health. He reckons himself to be the only mentally healthy man about, though his narrow-mindedness and soul-starvation are visible to all.

He is a very skeleton and an anatomy of sickness. And yet he believes himself to be the paragon of health. Those who admire their failings have evidently no wish to be free from them. "What a beautiful cataract I have in my eye," says one. "What a precious carbuncle decorates my limb," says another. "What a delightful bend this is in my leg," says a third. "What a comely hump adorns my back," says another. Men do not speak thus concerning their bodily diseases, or we should think them mad. But they often glory in their shame, and rejoice in their iniquities. Whenever you meet with a man who has a fault which he mentally elevates into a virtue, you have a man who would not wish to be made whole, and who would scorn the physician's visit if he waited at his door. And such persons are common in every street.

Let me also remark, if a man is made whole there are not only moral virtues which will abound in him, but spiritual Graces. For a man who is whole is sound in spirit as well as in outward character. What then, would happen to a man if he were made whole in his spirit? I reply, first, You see that Pharisee there, he is thanking God that he is quite as good as he should be, and a great deal better than most people. Now, if that man is ever made whole, he will say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

But if I were to ask him whether he would like to change places with

the publican, he would reply, "Why should I? He is a degraded and debased wretch. The language which he uses is very appropriate for him, I am glad he uses it. It would be very degrading to me to make the same confession as he does, and I do not intend doing it." The man does not want to be made whole--he thinks he is whole already. He that is made whole becomes a self-renouncing man. Paul was whole when he said, "Not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

When he counted his own righteousness to be but dung, that he might win Christ and be found in Him, he was a whole man. Sickly men think their own righteousness good enough, and wrap themselves in it, and stick a little sham jewelry of ceremony and outward form on it, and then conclude that they are right enough for Heaven. They are in such a fever of pride that they rave about their fancied goodness, while real goodness they call cant and hypocrisy.

He that is whole spiritually is a man of habitual prayer. He is accustomed to feel constant gratitude, and so to exhibit continual praise. He is a man of abiding consecration--whatever he does he does it unto God, seeking God's glory in it. His mind is fixed upon things unseen and eternal. His heart is not enslaved by the things that are seen, for he knows that they are vanity.

Now, if we were to appeal to many, and they fully knew what we meant by it, and say, "Would you be made whole? Would you from this hour become a prayerful man, a praiseful man, a holy man, a God-serving man?" I believe that the majority, even of our congregations, if they spoke honestly, would say, "No. We do not want to be made whole. We would like to go to Heaven, but we do not want this. We desire to escape from Hell, but we do not wish to practice all this Puritan precision which

you call holiness.

"No. We would enjoy ourselves with sinners first, and go to Heaven with the saints last. The poison is too sweet to give up, but we, too, will have the antidote by-and-by. We would gladly breakfast with the devil, and sup with Christ. We are in no hurry to be made pure, our tastes for the present lead us in another direction."

II. So, having explained the question, I shall, as strength holds out, go on to notice in the second place, that THIS QUESTION IS CAPABLE OF A GREAT MANY REPLIES, and therefore it is the more necessary that it should be asked and answered.

1. First, there are some here whose only reply to this question may be called no answer at all, that is to say, they do not want to hear or consider anything of the sort. "Will you be made whole?" "Well, yes, no--we do not quite know what to say. We do not want to be bothered about it. We are young people. There is plenty of time for us to think of these things. We are business people, we have something else to do besides worrying our minds with religion. We are wealthy persons, we really must not be expected to look at these things, as poor and coarse-minded persons are required to do."

Or, "We are sickly, and really, our attendance to our health takes up too much time to allow us to be troubled with theological difficulties." Anything, I see, to put away the one thing necessary from your thoughts. The poor soul is most precious, and yet least esteemed. Oh, how some of you trifle with your souls! How you play with your immortal interests! I did so once myself. If tears of blood could express my regret for having so done, I would gladly weep them. For the loss of time which comes through a long carelessness with regard to our

soul's interests is something very solemn--a loss of time which even mercy cannot restore to us--which even the Grace of God cannot give back.

I would, young people, that these things were on your minds. Oh, how earnestly I would that these questions were seen by you to be important! Yes, pressingly important--overwhelmingly important to you--so that you could not shake off religious enquiry, nor keep away from your spirit the loving pressure of the Holy Spirit who would arouse you. Would to God that you were made wise enough to desire the noble development of spiritual life, and the destruction of everything detrimental to your best welfare.

Be considerate, I pray you, concerning the first and chief question. Do not give it the go around. Your dying hour may be much nearer than you think. The tomorrow in which you hope to consider these things may never arrive. I would put it to you again--if anything is deferred let it be something that may safely wait. If anything is postponed let it not be an eternal thing, a spiritual thing, but, "seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Now, there are some persons who have had a great deal of religious concern and have not shaken it off, and yet their answer to this question, "Will you be made whole?" is not a very earnest one. Years ago they were aroused. When they heard a sermon they used to treasure up every word. Their prayers were importunate, and their desires were eager, but they have not obeyed the command which says, "Believe in Christ and live."

They have become habituated to unbelieving misery, to a continuance beneath the burden of sin which they will persist in carrying while there is a dear Savior waiting to relieve them of the burden. And now at this time their answer to the question is neither one thing nor the

other. They groan out feebly, "I wish I did wish. I would that I did will. But oh I my heart is hard --

'If anything is felt it is only pain To find I cannot feel.' I will to will, but scarcely dare say I will."

See to what a state you have brought yourself, and may God help you now to make a desperate effort with that will of yours--may His quickening Spirit bless this affectionate word to your heart, and may you say, "Ah, yes, out of my deep despair, out of the pit wherein there is no water, I do yet cry to You, my God! Out of the belly of Hell do I desire deliverance. I will, I will, I would be saved! O give me Grace that I may be made whole." May none of you continue to be numbered with those who virtually give no answer to the question.

2. And, secondly, there are too many who give very evasive replies to the question. To them I must speak. Will you be made whole? My dear Hearers, I am anxious to put this question to every unconverted one, but I anticipate that from several I shall get no distinct reply. I shall hear one say, "How am I to know whether I am God's elect or not?" Beloved, that is not the question. That question cannot be answered at this stage of the proceedings--it shall be answered by-and-by.

Meanwhile, why do you need to bring up that subject, except to blind your eyes to the solemn enquiry which the text would raise? Will you, or will you not, be made whole? Come, Man, do not shirk the question! Come to it, and face it like a man! Are you willing to be reconciled to God, and to be obedient to Him, or not? Say yes or no, and speak out. If you wish to be God's foe, and to love sin and unrighteousness, say so! Be honest with yourself, and see yourself in the true light? But if, indeed, you would be purified from sin and be made holy, say so--it will be no great thing, after all, to say nothing, at any rate, to

boast of. It is but a will, and that is nothing in which to glory.

"Well," says another, "I have not the power to cease from sin." Again I say that is not the question. There must evermore be drawn a distinction between the will and the power. God will give the power, rest assured, in proportion as He gives the will. It is because our will is not there that the power is not there. When a feeble will comes, a feeble power comes. But when the will becomes intense then the power becomes intense, too. They rise and fall together. But that is not the query. I do not say, "What can you do?" but "What would you be?" Would you be holy? Are you earnestly, honestly anxious to be, this day, set free from the power of sin? There is the question, and I do pray you, for your soul's sake, look into your heart and answer this enquiry as in the sight of God.

"But I have been so guilty in the past," says one, "my former sins alarm me." Again, though I am glad you have a sense of your sin, I would remind you that this is not the question. It is not how sick you are, but are you willing to be made whole? I know you are a sinner, and a much worse one than you think yourself to be. However black your sin is to your own eyes, it is ten times more black to God's eyes, and you are an utterly condemned and lost sinner by nature.

But the question, now, is, "Will you be made whole?" It is not, "Will you have the past forgiven, and be delivered from the penalty of it?" Of course you would! But would you be set free from the lusts that have been your delight, from the sins that have been your darlings? Would you be delivered from the desires of your flesh and of your mind, the things that your heart hungers after? Would you be made as the saints are, as God is--holy, set free from sin? Is that the yearning of your spirit, or is it not?

3. Now, I shall pass on to observe that there are a great many persons

who practically say, "No," to this. They do not evade it, but they honestly say, "No." No, I must retract that word. I question whether they honestly say, "No," they virtually say, "No," by their actions. "I would be made whole," says one, and yet when Divine service is over he goes back to his sin. A man says he would be cured of his disease, and yet he indulges again in that which gave the disease--is he untruthful or insane?

The eating of a certain meat may be the cause of disease--the doctor tells the patient so. He says he desires to be healed, and yet he falls back, at once, upon the very dish that caused his sickness. He is a liar, is he not? And he that says he would be made whole, and yet dallies with his old sin--does he not lie to himself, and his God? When a man would be made whole he frequents the places where healing is given. Yet there are some who very seldom go up to the House of God. They go, perhaps, but once on the Sunday.

They now and then hear the Gospel, or attend places because they are called places of worship--but the Gospel is not preached, the conscience is never harrowed, the demands of God's Law and the promises of God's Gospel are never fully insisted on. Yet are they quite content with having gone there, and think they have done well. They are like a man who, being sick, does not go to the physician who understands the case, but calls in at any quack's shop where there is a profession made of curing, though never one was cured. Such a person does not desire to be made whole. He would not act so if he did.

How many, again, hear the Gospel but do not hear it attentively! A telegram on the Exchange--they read it with both their eyes--will there be a rise or fall of stocks? An article from which they may judge of the general current of trade--how they devour it with their minds, they suck in the meaning, and then go and practice what they have gathered

from it.

A sermon heard, and lo, the minister is judged as to how he preached it--as if a man reading a telegram should say the capital letter was not well inked on the press, or the dot on the "I" had dropped off the letter. Or as if a man reading an article of business should simply criticize the style of the article, instead of seeking to get at its meaning, and act upon its advice. Oh, how men will hear and think it to be the height of perfection to say they liked or disapproved of the sermon! As if the God-sent preacher cared one whit whether you did or did not like his sermon--his business being not to please your tastes--but to save your souls! Not to win your approbation, but to win your hearts for Jesus, and bring you to be reconciled to God.

Liking is hardly to be thought of in the question--seldom enough is a patient enamored of a surgeon's scalpel. The surgeon who conscientiously removes the proud flesh, or prevents a wound from healing too rapidly, cannot expect admiration for his use of the knife while the sufferer yet feels it. Nor does the preacher, when faithfully declaring the Truth of God, expect men to commend him with their tastes. If their consciences commend him it is enough.

Ah, my Hearers, you give us listless hearing, critical hearing, anything but practical hearing, and all this goes to prove that, after all, though you crowd our houses of prayer, you do not want to be made whole! Too many take up the Gospel as a man of reading may take up a surgery book to amuse himself with a smattering of the art, but not to find out what will touch his own case, or remove his own sickness.

So you do with this Bible--you read it as a sacred volume, but not as bearing upon your own best interests. How little you know of deep, earnest, heart-longing to find Jesus! To be reconciled to God, and to be delivered from the wrath to come! There are men who both by their

non-hearing and their hearing, say, "We do not want to be made whole."

Many there are, again, who do not desire to be made whole because being made whole would involve their losing their present position in society. They do not want to part with their ungodly gains or wicked companions. Religion would involve them in some degree of persecution. They would not like to be sneered at as a Methodist or Presbyterian. They could not afford to go to Heaven if the road were a little rough. They would prefer to go to Hell so long as the road which leads there is smooth and pleasant.

They count it better to be lost with the approbation of fools than to be saved with the derision of the wicked. They think it inconvenient to be gracious, irksome to be pious, disreputable to be devout, foolish to be too exact. They would gladly have the crown without the fight, the reward without the service. They would enjoy the sweets of soul health, but not lose the advantages of associating with the leprous and defiled. Alas, poor fools!

4. Thank God, there are some who can say, "Yes, yes, I would be made whole." And of their case I am going to speak now.

III. WHEREVER AN HONEST, AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER IS GIVEN TO THIS QUESTION, WE MAY CONCLUDE THAT THERE IS A WORK OF GRACE COMMENCED IN THE SOUL. If any one of my hearers can earnestly say, "Yes, my great longing is to be set free from sin," my dear Friend, I am thrice happy to be privileged to speak to you this morning!

If you say, "It is not fear of punishment, sin is punishment enough for me. If I could be in Heaven and yet be a sinner such as I am, it would be no Heaven to me. I want to be clear from every fault both of thought, and word, and deed, and if I could be perfect I should be perfectly happy, even if I were sick and poor." Well, if the Lord has made you long after holiness, there is in your heart already the embryo

of Divine Grace, the seed of everlasting life. Before long you shall rejoice that you are born again, and are passed from death unto life. "Oh," you say, "I wish I could see that, I wish I could feel it!" I do not believe that any utterly graceless person ever could have hearty, earnest, intense longings after holiness for its own sake. Now if you would get the joy and peace that is to come out of this fact, I have to say to you very much what Jesus said to the poor man at Bethesda--he said, "Take up your bed, and walk." So now, this morning, hear the Words of the Lord--trust right now, at once, in the finished work of Jesus Christ, who as a Substitute was punished for your guilt.

Rely on Him, and you shall be a joyous as well as a saved soul. "Have I the power to believe in Christ?" says one. I answer, "Yes, you have the power. I would not say to every man, 'You have the power to exercise faith,' for the lack of will is the death of moral power. But if you are willing you have the right, you have the privilege, you have the power, to believe that Jesus died for you--that God, who has made you to long after holiness--has prepared holiness for you-- and the instrument by which He will work it in you now is your faith.

The same Spirit who in you works to will, is in you working to do of His own good pleasure. "Look, then, to Christ and be saved." I pray that some of you may come to perfect peace this morning, by looking to Christ. "I want holiness," you say. Yes, and it may seem a strange thing, but true is it, that while you look after holiness in yourself you will never have it, but if you look away from yourself to Christ, then holiness will come unto you. Even now, that very desire of yours has come to you from Him. It is the beginning of the new birth in your soul. Look, I pray you, away, right away, even from your best desires--to Christ on the Cross--and this day shall be the day of your salvation.

It may seem a very little thing to have a desire, but yet such a desire as I have described is no little thing. It is more than human nature ever produced of itself, and only God the Eternal Spirit can implant it. I am persuaded that a living, saving faith always goes with it, and sooner or later comes to the surface, and brings joy and peace!

IV. But now, lastly, WHERE THIS QUESTION IS ANSWERED IN THE NEGATIVE, I must remind you, IT INVOLVES MOST FEARFUL SIN. I could wish I had not to preach on this last point, but I must, painful as it is. There are some here, there are many elsewhere, who are not willing to be made whole. You, my unconverted Brethren, are thus unwilling. Face that, now, I pray you, as you will have to face it soon.

It is just this. You prefer yourself to God. You prefer to please yourself before pleasing Him. You prefer sin to holiness. Look at it closely and fairly. Sin is your own choice, your own present deliberate choice. You are now making it,

and have often made it, and will, I fear, continue to make it, if God's Grace does not prevent it. Look it in the face, for soon, on a dying bed, you will see the whole matter in the light of eternity. You will then discover that you preferred the pleasures of this life to Heaven. You preferred the gaieties and amusements, and self-righteousnesses, and prides, and self-wills of a few fleeting years to the Glory and the bliss of perfectly obeying Christ, and being in His Presence forever. Oh, when you come to die, and certainly when you live in another state, you will curse yourself for having made such a choice as this! When you lie dying unsaved, it will come to you thus, "I am not here an unsaved man unwillingly--I would not be made whole--I willed not to be a Believer, I willed to be impenitent. I heard the Gospel, I had it put before me, but I deliberately willed to put it behind me and to remain what I am. I find now I am dying unforgiven and unholy, and that of

choice."

Remember, no spiritually unsound man can enter Heaven. He must be made whole, or be shut out of Glory. We cannot stand in the most holy place until we are made perfect. Then you, O unhealed soul, remaining as you are, will never stand in God's Presence--and you choose, you deliberately choose never to be admitted to the courts of Paradise! Furthermore, and oh, how this will strike you in a short time (how short I know not, nor do you)--there being no entrance into Heaven for you, you having elected not to enter Heaven--there will remain but one other thing, namely, for you to be driven from His Presence into the eternal burnings of His wrath!

This will surely be one of the stings of Hell, that you perish of your own accord. How will you cry, "I chose this, I chose this! Fool that I was, I willed this!" For what is Hell? It is sin full-blown. Sin is evil in the conception, Hell is sin in its development. What thoughts will be yours in Hell? "I chose that which has involved me in a misery from which there never can be any escape. In a death out of which there can be no deliverance. I must die to God, to holiness, to happiness, and exist forever in that everlasting death, that eternal punishment, and all because I would have it so, and as the result of my own free will."

Do look that in the face, I pray you. It seems to me to be the most dreadful element about the whole of the lost sinner's case. If I could, when cast into Hell, say, "I am here because of God's decree, and for no other reason," I could find something with which to harden my spirit to endure the misery of my lost condition. But if I shall be compelled in Hell to feel that my ruin is of myself altogether and only, and that I perish for my own sin--my personal rejection of Christ-- then is Hell, Hell indeed. These flames, are they of my own kindling? This

prison house, is it my own building? That door so fast as never to open, is it my own barring? Then the last relic of consolation is taken away from my soul forever.

But, my dear Hearer, I hope you say, "I do desire to be made whole." Then let me again remind you that the place to find the fulfillment of that desire is at the foot of the Cross. Stand there and hope in the great Redeemer for there is some life in you already, the dying Savior will increase it! Stand at the foot of the Cross where falls the precious drops of blood--view the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood, and hope, no, BELIEVE that He shed that blood for you, and you are saved! Go your way, you who would be made whole, for Jesus says, "I will, be you clean."

Chapter 48

Think Well And Do Well

(No. 956)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For Your loving kindness is before my eyes: and I have walked in Your Truth." Psalm 26:3.

THROUGHOUT this Psalm David is laboring under the fear that he should be judged and condemned with the ungodly world. He feels in his own heart that he is not one with the enemies of God, and he shudders lest having hated their society on earth he should be shut up in their company forever. His agonizing prayer is, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." In urging reasons before the Throne of Grace why he should not be reckoned in the same condemnation as the ungodly, he urges not self-righteously, but truthfully and confidently that there was a difference made by Grace between himself and them.

"I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evildoers.

And will not sit with the wicked.....Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells." There was a difference, he declares, between himself and the wicked, even in the current of his thoughts. While their thoughts ran upon the world, vanity, sin, rebellion, hypocrisy, and violence, his meditations were upon all the marvelous works of God, and especially upon His loving kindness--"Your loving kindness is before my eyes." it is an encouraging fact when we can honestly feel as before God that our

thoughts are habitually exercised upon Himself and upon Divine Truth. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

We may form a better judgment of ourselves probably from the tenor of our thoughts than from any other evidence. If our thoughts all go downward, downward we ourselves are going. But if there are some breathings towards the heavenly, some aspirations of our spirit towards the pure and perfect Father of Lights, then may we have hope that we, also, are ascending towards the heavenly places, and shall dwell in them hereafter. David could urge, besides the secret evidence of his devout thoughts, the public proof of his holy acts--"I have walked in Your Truth." It would be vanity for a man to find evidence of a renewed heart in his private meditations if those thoughts were not sufficiently deep to lead him to practical godliness.

The thoughts become a valuable evidence because of their influence upon the life, but if they were so powerlessly superficial that our daily life was in no degree affected by them, they would be as salt that has lost its savor. If our actions are evil, it is vain to take comfort from our thoughts. If actions speak louder than words, they may well speak louder than thoughts. We must display outward holiness, or else our inward experience of Grace exists only in pretense. You may think of what you will, but if your whole conversation is according to the will of the flesh and not after the will of God your thoughts are nothing--you have deceived yourself as to their tenor--they cannot be as you say they are, thoughts truthful, holy, devout and Divine.

Put the two together, holy thoughts and holy living, and you have two sure evidences of a renewed nature. And if God has given you both of these, though you will probably confess that you have them not in the measure in which you would desire to have them, yet bless the Grace that has so worked upon you, and rejoice this morning, and go on in

holy confidence to ask for a greater measure of the same Divine working. Would to God our thoughts may become uniformly gracious, and our lives perfectly consistent with our thoughts--and with the Divine Word.

I mean, this morning, to take the two parts of the text separately, and then to consider the link which unites them. First, then, we shall have to consider the mind occupied with a fruitful subject. Secondly, the life ordered by a right rule. And thirdly, the link which connects the two.

I. First then, may every Christian experimentally know to a fuller degree what it is to have A MIND OCCUPIED WITH A FRUITFUL SUBJECT. "Your loving kindness is before my eyes." It is exceedingly profitable to the Christian to have always some subject of thought upon his mind. The mind that is vacant, frivolous, unoccupied, will be sure to issue in a barren and unprofitable life. I fear, to a very large extent, in this age the minds, even of good people, are empty, and void, and a waste.

Years ago, when the influence of the Puritan age yet lingered among us, the female members of Christian Churches were generally women of very considerable education. Their range of reading was very different from that of their sisters in these days, and their theological knowledge was profound. While the men who were members of our Nonconformist Churches, were, as a rule, persons of very clear doctrinal knowledge--perhaps rather too much given to controversy, and to pushing their own views without sufficient tolerance for the views of others.

On the whole, Nonconformist Christianity was highly intelligent, thoughtful, and meditative. Men and women then, when they joined the Church, knew what they believed, and believed what they knew. They were prepared to be counted singular for their belief, but were equally

prepared to justify themselves for talking up so separated a position. They were students of the Word of God and of such books as opened up to them the Word of God--so that our armies of Believers, if they were fewer than now, were nevertheless very strong, because the warriors handled their weapons well, were well drilled, and at home in the holy war.

I fear a great many Christian people do not think much about their religion. They give their guinea subscription, they occupy their seat at the meeting house, they attend the Prayer Meetings, but they are little given to thinking out a system of doctrine, or to ransacking the weaning of Scripture. Contemplative pursuits are not so general among Christian professors as I could wish. Not that I desire to see an increase of a certain amateur class of people who are always expounding prophecy, or spelling out types, and leaving ragged people to perish in ignorance, and the masses of our city to remain not evangelized.

The sooner we bury the last of our Prophetic pretenders the better. They expose the Truth of God to ridicule and rather hinder, than promote, the cause of religion. Louis Napoleon was to be the Antichrist, and to conquer all Europe--I wonder how they will play their cards now! Of late they have grown so impudent as to foretell the future with all the brass of a Sidrophel, a Lilly, or a Dr. Dec. I hope their failures will open the eyes of the public to their folly.

I so reverence the inspired prophecies that I wish a race of students would succeed these charlatans. We need devoutly meditative people who will think about the precious things of God in a practical, gracious way, such as the Holy Spirit inspires. We need men who are not forever occupying themselves with theories and speculations, but with the solidities and with the practical parts of theology. A band of such men, strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, would have a

great influence for good. And if all professors were such, the Church would be rich, indeed.

Observe, that when the mind does not receive holy matters to feed upon, as a rule it preys upon itself. Like certain of our bodily organs which, if not supplied with nutritive matter, will soon begin to devour their own tissues, and then all sorts of aches, pains, and ultimately diseases will set in. The mind, when it eats into itself, forms doubts, fears, suspicions, complaints, and nine out of ten of the doubts and fears of God's people come from two things--walking at a distance from God, and want of spiritual nutriment for the soul.

If you, Believer, do not meditate upon some Scriptural subject, your minds will probably turn to vanity or to some evil within yourselves, and you will not long think of the corruption within without becoming the subjects of a despondency which will turn you into Mistress Dispondencies or Mr. Feebleminds, whereas by musing on the promises of the Holy Spirit you would grow into good soldiers and happy pilgrims.

Of some who do not feed their souls constantly with spiritual nourishment Satan takes an advantage and fills them with unholy thoughts.

It is a very frequent complaint with persons who desire to be in the fear of God all day long, that they are molested with horrible insinuations, dreadful suggestions, and revolting ideas. And they fly to the pastor sometimes to know whether they can be the children of God at all, or if the children of God, what remedy they can use by which they shall be able to escape from this horrible torment.

I suggested yesterday to a friend laboring under this serious complaint, that he should take care never to go out in the morning without placing under his tongue a text of Scripture like a wafer made with honey. And I exhorted him at all times to occupy his mind with

heavenly subjects, so that there should be the less likelihood of the thoughts running after that which is evil. The best way to prevent a bushel measure from being filled with chaff is to fill it first with wheat. If the channel of the soul is filled with a strong stream of devout thought, there cannot be much mud and filth lying in the bottom. A powerful stream of holy contemplation will scour the thoughts and bear away the foul deposits of unholy thought. There is nothing like keeping the mind occupied, for Satan finds some evil still for idle brains to think upon. It is true that weeds and nettles choke the good seed, but it is equally true that when the good seed gets strong above ground it will choke the weeds. Where Jesus is, the buyers and sellers are driven out of the temple. Dagon falls where the ark comes. When Israel comes in the Canaanite must go out. Fill the cage of your heart with the birds of Paradise, and the foul birds will not have it all to themselves. If our soul shall become so full of thoughts of God and things Divine, that vain thoughts shall be banished, it will be a fine growing time for the plants of the Lord's right hand planting.

Learn from the text the usefulness of having some sacred topic before the mind's eye.

David, in selecting the topic of Divine loving kindness did well, for let us remark upon that subject, that it is, first of all, a rightful subject of meditation. I mean, it is our bounden duty to think much upon it. Some things we may not think of, certain other topics we are barely allowed to think of, but other themes we must think of. Now the loving kindness of God is one of the things which is not left to our choice. We are bound to meditate much upon that. As Dr. Watts says--

"Oh, bless the Lord, my Soul, Nor let His mercies lie Forgotten in unthankfulness, And without praises die."

Shall God, day after day, send such stores of mercy to such unworthy

ones as we are, and shall we treat His continuous generosity as a matter of course, and not even think of it? Base ingratitude! Let us scorn such meanness. If we ought to think of our duty to God, and of our violation of that duty, yet much more of the loving kindness which makes our duty pleasure, and which covers over with a mantle of love the transgressions of our lives. Infinite goodness is a rightful subject of meditation, and it deserves a large share of our thoughts.

It is, besides, a good subject. It is good in itself, and it will do us good. The loving kindness of God--it is not possible any harm can come to us from retaining that subject too long in our minds. A man who has but one idea will sometimes become an unbalanced, inharmonious man--oftentimes he will fall into obstinacy, bigotry, or rashness through the excessive indulgence of that one thought--just as one feature exaggerated out of proportion with the rest will make an ugly countenance.

But you cannot think too much upon Divine loving kindness. You may make this, if you will, the one sole topic of your thought and yet escape narrow-mindedness or one-sidedness. It has so many links of union with all other subjects, that when you consider this it will bring up, as it were, compendiously a whole circle of profitable meditation. Think of the Divine loving kindness, and it shall be good, only good, and that continually. As you muse upon it your thoughts will humble you. "Why such goodness to me, to me who is less than the least of all Your mercies?"

The same theme will be equally sure to comfort you. "Is the Lord so good to me? Then amid every adversity my spirit shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the God of my salvation." To think of this will stimulate you to be full of loving kindness to others who may have acted unjustly or ungenerously towards you. As God has loved you so

bounteously you will be bound to pity and assist the poor and needy. This subject will benefit you in all respects, and harm you in none. Ring this silver bell again and again, it is good for the hearing. Moreover, dear Brethren, it is a wide subject. To set His loving kindness before our eyes is not to select a narrow theme which we can soon exhaust. It is a boundless topic. The loving kindness of the Lord has no beginning. You may fly backward to the ages past in meditation deep and long--Divine loving kindness shall have no end.

You may look into the ages yet to come with joyful musings. Loving kindness is high as Heaven, to which it shall lift you. It is deep as Hell, from which it has redeemed you. It is wide as the east is from the west, for so far has He removed all your transgressions from you. Here is a subject in which you may expatiate without limit or fear of repetition. If up to now you have bathed in this stream up to the ankles, proceed in meditation deeper still, for you shall find it a river to swim in--a very broad river that cannot be passed over. The width of the subject is one thing which leads me to commend it to you as a theme for the most expanded intellect in time and in eternity.

And it is a pleasing subject. "Your loving kindness is before my eyes." Nobody need grow weary of this. It is like traversing a country in which every single inch of the road opens up a new prospect. Here you see the loving kindness of God in the land in which you were born, in the times in which your life is cast, in the mercies with which your life is sur-

rounded. You may see the loving kindness of God in your temporal mercies. You cannot go to your house or bedchamber without seeing it there. You see that loving kindness even more clearly in spirituals. What a blessing to be interested in the Covenant of Grace! How many a holy hymn awakens memories of the tender mercies past! How this very

House, and the seat you sit on, refreshes your recollections as to what God has done for you in days gone by! "The loving kindness of the Lord." I never knew a man grow heavy in spirit from meditating upon this! I never knew a man become weary of the cares and burdens of life through thinking of God's loving kindness! No, but he has grown stronger to bear his burden, or to fight his way through time's conflict, when the loving kindness of the great Preserver of men has come visibly before his mind.

And you may add, it is a very plain and simple subject, and one that is suitable to us all. The loving kindness of the Lord is a topic that can be reached by the babe in Grace, and yet will not be superfluous to the most advanced. There are topics in Scripture so profound and surrounded with such metaphysical difficulties, and rendered so much more perplexing by the wisdom, or the unwisdom, of divines, that one might almost say to the Christian thinker, "You may pass those by, for you will never get much out of them. The quartz is too hard. There is too little gold to pay for breaking up."

But when you come to this subject the unskilled convert may sit down and meditate on the loving kindness of God and be edified. While at the same time the most proficient scholar in the school of Christ shall find something fresh and new every time he meditates thereon. You are little read, you say. You have little access to the thoughts of great men. Your Bible is your only book. Ah, well, but the Providence of God will make you a second, and the experience of your heart, touching Christ and things Divine, will make you a third volume!

And put the three together, the book of Revelation, the book of Providence, the book of your inward experience, and with these three you have a wondrous library! And in them all you may read the loving kindness of the Lord towards your soul. I will finish this part of my

subject by saying that this is always a suitable and a seasonable topic. The young Christian, in the early flush of his joy, may think on the loving kindness of God. It will help to keep him joyful and yet to make him sober.

The venerable Christian matron may, before she departs, dwell still upon this topic, and tell her children and her children's children of what God has done for her. In your health or in your sickness, in your wealth or in your poverty, in your joy or in your sorrow--still, this theme of the loving kindness of God will be congenial and healthful.

This you may study on the top of Amana when you have passed by the leopards' dens. This you may rehearse in the Valley of Humiliation when you lie down with the shepherd boy among the flocks and sing--

"He that is down need fear no fall, He that is low, no pride."

This you may think of when you are fighting with Apollyon, and the darts fly thick as hail, yes, fiery darts that burn as well as wound.

And this you may think of in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, when heart and flesh fail you. This may be your last song, and as you enter into Glory it may be your first--

"Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all my mortal powers must fail.
O may my last expiring breath
His loving kindness sing in death!
Then let me mount and soar a way
To the bright world of endless day,
And sing with rapture and surprise,
His loving kindness in the skies." I have thus introduced to you the topic for mental contemplation. We will at once proceed to the second part of our subject.

II. The Psalmist sets before US A LIFE ORDERED BY A RIGHT RULE. "I have

walked in Your Truth." I wish we could say this as positively as he does, each of us. I am afraid we should have to alter it, and say, "I desire to have Your loving kindness before my eyes, and to walk in Your Truth." I shall invite each of you to look over your diaries to see how you could make such a statement, and the following remarks I offer as reflections to help you.

He means, first, by the words, "Your Truth," "I have tried to order my religion according to the Truth concerning God and the way in which He would be worshipped. I have worshipped the true God in the true way. I have searched to

see what and who God is, how He would be served, and in what way. And according to what I have learned from Himself I have walked in His Truth." Can you all say that?

Why, even all Christians cannot say as much! They worship God--yes, but how? As their fathers did or their grandmothers? Why have they worshipped God as they now do? Because the Word of God so teaches? No. But because their family has been so brought up. They never took the trouble to see whether it was right, and would not like to take the trouble now. Their family always did it, therefore they will always do it. Such people can say, "I have walked according to my ancestors." But they cannot say, "I have walked in Your Truth."

If their fathers had worshipped the devil, they would have done the same. If their family had worshipped Juggernaut, they would have worshipped him, too. It makes no consequence to some people what it is, they go in for, "follow my leader." They are of one mind with the old Saxon king, who, when he was about to be baptized, stood with one leg in the water, and enquired of the bishop, "Where do you say my ancestors are gone? They knew nothing about your Christianity."

"All cast into Hell," said the bishop. "Well, then," said this fine old

conservative, "I will go with them. I should not like to be parted from my kith and kin." Very much of this principle rules our country still. The majority of men do not walk in God's Truth, nor care to know what God's Truth is. I know they will say there are so many sects, and so on, as if there, after all, was such a difficulty about the Word of God that a simple-minded man could not find out what the Truth is. The Bible is a plain enough book, and if a man wishes to understand it he can.

Dear Brethren, if you are Christians, do be able to say, "I have desired to know the Truth about Yourself, O my God, and how You would be worshipped, and so far as I have learned I have walked in Your Truth." He means next that he had walked according to God's Law. He believed God's Law to be the essential right, the just rule of action, and he had tried to do right in all respects. There is a line of Truth which you can clearly see, which needs not be laid down in words. And it is a glorious thing when a man can say, "I may not have been always prosperous in business, I may not have succeeded as some have done, but what does that matter? I have kept a conscience void of offense. As a Christian man I have done the right and left the consequences with God." This is true evidence of Grace reigning in the heart, when we can confidently say before God that, notwithstanding all our sins, transgressions, and infirmities, yet towards men we have walked in the Truth as God would have us walk. This is to have the outward life ordered in Truth.

And did not he mean this, also, that as God had been truthful to him, so he had been enabled by Grace to be truthful to God? "I have walked in Your Truth." My God, You have never lied to me. I have also strived to be true to You. I have found Your promise to be always certain. I have labored to make my vows, which I have presented to You, as certain

as the fulfillment of Your promises. Have you all done this? Years ago some of you put on Christ, and avowed yourselves His followers. By your Baptism you made a declaration of death to the world, and of life in Christ--has it been so? Have you walked in God's Truth? He has never failed in anything towards us. Alas, what is there in which we have not failed towards Him? He has been true to us in the Covenant of His Grace--have we kept the pledge and bonds which bind us to His Church and to His cause? Can we say, "As You have walked in Your Truth to me so have I walked in Truth to You"?

If we have failed here I should not wonder it is because we have failed in the first part of the text. Our thoughts have not been enough with God and therefore our lives have not been true to Him. May we be helped in both parts of the text, so that while our hearts feed upon His Truth our feet may walk in His Truth, and we may be faithful Christians before the Lord our God.

III. But time flies, and I need space for the third head, which is, THE LINK WHICH BINDS THE TWO PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER. "Your loving kindness is before my eyes. I have walked in Your Truth." The one has been the consequence of the other. Because I thought much of Your love, therefore have I walked in Your Truth. Our thoughts very greatly influence our actions. It is questionable whether a man could long think on any subject without the course of his life being colored by it. Like certain silkworms which yield silk colored according to the food they have fed on, so our life gradually takes the tinge and hue of the thoughts to which we most accustom ourselves.

We have had in our police courts of late frequent instances of this. Boys have been studying literature of the Jack Sheppard and Dick Turpin order--and they have become thieves of necessity. Men who have been deeply read in French

novels, Byronic poetry, and German metaphysics have become dissolute and skeptical, and none could wonder. You cannot send the mind up the chimney and expect it to come down white. Whatever read, the thoughts traverse--all the faculties of manhood will go after them. So you see, Brethren, David had thought upon God's loving kindness, and very soon his whole spirit went after big thoughts, and he walked in God's Truth.

Let me show you a little of this. I will suppose, this morning, that you and I are meditating upon the subject suggested. Let us set God's loving kindness before our eyes, and one of its most striking points is its eternity. It is certain that God loved those whom He now loves before time began. Those who are the favored sons of God have not lately come into the possession of His love--they were loved of Him before the foundation stone of creation was laid. It is a glorious doctrine! There is room for the soul to revel and riot with holy delight in it.

Everlasting love, love without beginning towards unworthy worms! Well, now, what comes of it? Why, naturally, the moment the heart gets into the enjoyment of it, it cries, "I will walk in God's Truth. This great doctrine leads me to receive other great doctrines. I am not afraid, now, of doctrinal knowledge. If it is so that God has loved me before the world began, and has blessed me with all spiritual blessings accordingly as He chose me in Christ Jesus, then I am not afraid to consider the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace, the doctrine of His foreknowledge and of His predestination, and all the other doctrines that spring therefrom. The brightness of this one gem has attracted me to enter into the mines of Divine thought, and I will seek from now on to be conversant with the deep things of God."

Many would be much more sound in doctrine if they meditated more upon the eternity of Divine loving kindness. Now turn that loving kindness

round again, get another view of it. Let another ray of light flash from this diamond. Think of the freeness of it! God's loving kindness to us was utterly undeserved. He loved us, not because there was anything lovable about us, but because He chose to do so. He is an absolute Sovereign, and He does as He wills with His own. It is because He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, that He has had mercy upon us.

Unworthy, did I say? More unworthy was I than any, least likely, as it seemed, of any of the sons of men to be a partaker of Divine love. If He so freely loved me, what shall I say? I must freely love Him in return. I cannot but reciprocate this love. If I cannot love Him as He loves me in degree, yet will I at any rate love Him as freely and willingly. Has He chosen me? I choose Him. Has He ordained me that I should be saved? My heart ordains that He shall be glorious. And if there is anything that I can do to serve Him, let me know what it is, for it must be, it shall be done.

Turn that loving kindness round again, look at another side of it, namely, its certainty. It is no fiction that God loves His people. If you are Believers in Christ Jesus, trusting alone to His merits, God as surely loves you as He is God. There is no question about the matter. His Divine love is as certainly yours as His power is displayed in creation. Well, then, let your obedience be real in return.

If He really loves me, then will I really love Him, and truly serve Him. It shall not be talk, and resolution, and pretense. There shall be that gift given, even if I deny myself to give it. There shall be that deed done, whatever self-denial it may cost me. The Cross I will take up--the singularity of being a Christian I will dare to encounter. The persecution it will bring I will rejoice in--the love of God to me shall produce obedience in my heart in return.

Then, again, another view of it. Set the loving kindness of God before your eyes, and think of the faithfulness of it. God's loving kindness never pauses a minute. It has been as constant as the flight of time--never a moment but there has been love for that moment. Never an hour, but there has been the hour's portion of loving kindness. You have often forgotten the Lord, but He has never forgotten you. You have turned aside from your fidelity ten thousand times, but He never once. If He had dealt with you justly, and not graciously, He had long ago divorced you from His heart.

But you are as dear to Him now as ever, and you shall be dear to Him when Heaven and earth shall pass away. Well, what then? Why, then, as constantly seek to serve Him. Let every day have its duty, and let each day's duty be your pleasure and privilege. Do not be receiving without also giving out. As the sovereign goodness of God comes to you without a pause, and there are no miscarriages in Divine Grace, so let there never be any forgetfulness, negligence, or delay in your gratitude, and the obedience which spring's of it.

I would like you to think of the exactness of God's loving kindness, and how it goes into detail with us in little things. Much of our life's happiness depends upon little things happening rightly. If God ordained only the great events, and left the little things to chance, we should be very unhappy. But the loving kindness of God, while it gilds the whole landscape with sunlight, also has a beam for the tiniest insect and a ray for the eye of the smallest bird. Let our love to

God also go into the minutest details--let us be earnest to be right in matters essential. But let us not be indifferent to things nonessential, as men call them.

God's loving kindness goes into detail, so let my obedience. Let

gratitude to God permeate my entire life. Let it flood the whole of my faculties. Let it saturate my manhood through and through. Great God, Your love surrounds me, I breathe it, I live upon it, I shall die in it, I shall live forever in it, it shall make my eternal bliss! So would my soul in obedience give up herself, her thoughts, her works, her desires, her judgment, her tastes, her everything to Your sweet love which has so wondrously embraced and encompassed me!

You see, there is a logical consistency between thinking of the love of God, getting to see its details and attributes, and the ordering of our life in the way of Truth. The one is the natural cause from which the other is sure to spring. Once more, let me say, when we are thinking upon God's loving kindness, we must not forget what it is preparing for us. Within a short time you and I shall have faced the last article of death, or Christ Himself shall have come, and we shall be forever with the Lord. We have been washed in the blood of Jesus, our souls have been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and for us there is prepared and reserved a crown of life that fades not away.

Anticipate the triumphant hour when this head which often aches with weariness shall be encircled with the crown of Glory! Think of the time when the hands that are worn with toil shall grasp the palm branch! And the feet that are weary with this pilgrimage shall stand upon the sea of glass--when our constant occupation shall be to glorify Him who has uplifted us from the miry clay, set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings forever! All this loving kindness is prepared for us, entailed upon us, ordained for us, and we are ordained to it by a decree which neither death nor Hell can change.

What then? Why then the trials of this life shall be treated as "light afflictions which are but for a moment." And if duty at anytime involves these trials, we will not take them into consideration--but

for the joy that is set before us will endure the Cross, despising the shame. Men and women of God, God's loving kindness has prepared for you this heritage inconceivable, which heart cannot imagine, and, therefore, tongue cannot express. Will you not, for the sake of this, be willing to be despised, and be ready, if need be, to be spit upon and rejected from the society of men? Why, this, me-thinks, it was that glistened in the martyrs' eyes.

There they stood at the stake, all calm and confident, though every bone was soon to be burned to cinder, and the whole frame of their bodies to become a mass of agony. The light that shone in the martyrs' eyes was not the flame of the torch which kindled the firewood, but the light of everlasting Glory! The joy that made their hearts glad was not that of obstinacy which holds fast to its own way, but it was the firmness of a soul that is one with the immortal Christ, and anticipates being with God forever and forever!

The loving kindness of God before our eyes is that which can make us walk in God's Truth though it be to prison and to death. God grant us more of the holy contemplation, and we shall be quite certain to have more of holy, consistent walking in the Truth.

I have done when I have made two or three more remarks. I have set these things before you as they ought to be, but things are not in this world as they should be. There are some men who have the first part of the text, at least they say they have, but they despise the second. They have set God's loving kindness before their eyes, but do not walk in God's Truth. They talk about being God's elect, God's Beloved, God's dear people. Alas, some of them are dear at any price, their lives being, in many cases, utterly inconsistent with their profession.

What do we say of men who make the Doctrines of Grace an excuse for licentiousness? They have the Doctrine of Grace, but not the Grace of

doctrine. What say we of them? Why, what Paul said--"Their damnation is just." All their pretences to soundness, all their talk about orthodoxy is so much wind, nothing more. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The man who can cheat in business. The man who can lie. The man who is an unkind husband, a bad father, an unholy man--he may believe what he likes, or disbelieve what he likes--but he will be swept away from the Presence of God and the glory of His power when He whose fan is in His hand shall purge His floor and gather the wheat into His garner--and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

There are also men who say, "I have walked in God's Truth," but God's loving kindness is never before their eyes. They boast about their admirable character, but they never think upon the Grace of God. They indulge the Pharisaic

spirit. Permit us to say to such that they know not what spirit they are of. That life of theirs which they think to be so blameless seems to be correct because they are blind.

If the light shone in upon their actions they would discover their imperfections. Then would they find that they needed a Savior, and finding that they needed a Savior they might then be led to apply for one, and find one. But as long as they wrap themselves up in the notion that they are good, and that they keep the Law and have done so from their youth up--we must remind them with all earnestness that they are shutting themselves out of Heaven. They are denying themselves all prospect of everlasting life, for, "by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified." We must be saved by Grace and by Grace alone.

My last word is this. Brethren, depend upon it that you shall find, each of you when you get dull and flagging in the practical part of your religion, that the proper way to revive it is to think more than you have done upon the loving kindness of God. I do not know whether

you ever feel stupid. I do, dreadfully. When one gets a bad cold the mind feels terribly dead and dull. Some people are dull enough even when they are well, but what they are when illness is added it were hard to say.

Well, then, one says, "How can I consider myself to be a child of God? Why, I cannot pray. I kneel down and pour out what ought to be my desires, but I am afraid I do not desire them. I read the Bible, but it does not glow and glisten before my eyes as it once did. I try to love God, but do not seem to have any emotion left. I am like a dead log or stone." What is the best way to quicken one's self when you have got to be just a mere inanimate mass, and cannot awaken yourself into life? Of course--the Holy Spirit is the Quickener--but what means shall we use? "Why," says one, "turn over your sins and begin to think of them."

Well, I have known some become more dead than they were before through that, and the little life they had seemed to go out of them as they saw their transgressions. I believe there is no reflection that has so much, under God the Holy Spirit, of quickening power in it as a remembrance of the loving kindness of the Lord! I have said unto my soul, "You are dull and heavy today, my Soul, but Jesus did not love you because of your brightness and liveliness. You have, at any rate, a desire not to be so dull.

"Who gave you that? Was not it His own Grace that made you hate yourself for being so dull and stupid? And He loves you just the same."

Why, then, I am aware my soul makes me like the chariots of Amminadab--before I have hardly got through a little meditation upon my Lord's love, my love is kindled. Dr. Watts hit the mark when he said --

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, With all Your quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love, And that shall kindle ours."

If you doubt Christ's love to you, you will not love Him. But remember

that He still loves you, believe it, hold on to it, and your love will revive--

"And when your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim,
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God your help shall be." If I am a dead soul and a lost soul and have not a grain of Grace, and have everything that is bad about me, still I will cling to the Cross, and say, "I will never depart from this place: if I perish, I will perish here." Light will come unto you again, and the joy of the Lord will return, and your heart will wonder to find its own hardness depart, and your dumb tongue shall sing, and you, though once so lame, shall leap as a hart! God the Holy Spirit cause these meditations to be the means of quickening our spirits, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 49

Jesus No Phantom

(No. 957)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost. And they cried out for fear." Matthew 14:26.

SOME of the richest comforts are lost to us for want of clear perception. What consolation could be greater to the tempest-tossed disciples than to know their Master was present, and to see Him manifestly revealed as Lord of sea as well as land? Yet because they did not discern Him clearly, they missed the incomparable consolation. What is worse, at times the dimness of our perception will even turn the rarest consolation into the source of fear. Jesus is come, and in His coming the Sun of their joy has risen, but they do not perceive it to be Jesus. And thinking it to be a phantom, they are filled with alarm and cry out in dread.

He who was their best Friend, they were as much afraid of as though He had been the arch enemy. Christ walking on the waves should have put all fear to rest, but instead they mistake Him for a ghost appearing amidst the storm, foreboding darker ill. They were filled with dismay by that which ought to have lifted them up with exultation. Oh, the benefit of the heavenly eye salve by which the eyes are cleared! May the Holy Spirit anoint our eyes therewith. Oh, the excellence of faith which, like the telescope, brings Christ near to us, and lets us see Him as He is! Oh, the sweetness of walking near to Christ, and knowing Him with an assured, confident, clear knowledge--for this would give us

comforts which now we miss--and at once remove from us distresses which today unnecessarily afflict us.

The subject upon which I wish to speak will be indicated to you if I, first of all, supply you with the outline of it. The first head will be this--it is too common an error to make a phantom of Christ. And, secondly, we are most apt to do this when Jesus is most evidently revealed. And therefore, thirdly, from this come our greatest sorrows. And, fourthly, if we could be cured of this evil, Jesus would rise very much in our esteem and many other blessed results would be sure to follow.

I. IT IS TOO COMMON AN ERROR TO MAKE A PHANTOM OF CHRIST. There are some who make a Christ of a phantom. I mean they take that to be their Savior which is but a delusion. They have dreamed so. They have excited themselves up to a high pitch of presumptuous credulity. They have persuaded themselves into delusive comfort, and they make their excited feeling or fancy their Christ. They are not saved, but they think they are. Jesus is not known to them. They are unspiritual. They are not His sheep. They are not His disciples, yet they have put something up before their mind's eye which they think to be Christ, and their ideal of Christ, which is but a phantom, is Christ to them.

A terrible error! May God save us from it and bring us to know the Lord in deed and in Truth by the teaching of His Holy Spirit. For to know Him is life eternal. But an equally and probably a more common error is to make a phantom of Christ. More or less we have all erred in this direction. Let me show you this for reproof and direction. First, how often we have done this in the matter of sin and like cleansing of it!

Our sin seems to us, when we are convinced of it, very real. Real, indeed, it is--our offenses against God are no imaginary ones--we have really provoked Him to wrath, and He is angry with us every day.

The stain of sin is not on the surface, merely, the leprosy lies deep within. Sin is a horrible evil, and when our spirits have been able to see the reality and the heinousness of it, they sink within us. But oh, what a glorious thing it is when we can, with equal vividness, see the actual cleansing from sin which Christ confers on all Believers by His precious blood! To see the scarlet and to weep over it is well, but to see that same scarlet vanish in the pure white of the atoning Sacri-fice--this is better.

Did you ever get as clear a perception of the second as you have done of the first? It is a great blessing when God makes sin to be experimentally heavy to you so that you feel it. But it is a greater blessing, still, when the atoning blood

is quite as vividly realized, and you see the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the pouring out of the life of the Redeemer upon Calvary, and the agonies unknown by which guilt was fully expiated before the Eternal Throne. My Brethren, when we are under concern of soul, or even after our first conviction--when sin returns heavily upon our spirits--our fears, and terrors, and alarms, are real enough.

No one dares to say to us, then, that we are in a state of nervous excitement about a fiction. Our danger, then, is right before us, as clearly as the flames are before some poor person immured in a burning house--we are sure of the danger, we see it, we perceive it, we feel it in the very core of our nature. But there is salvation provided by the Redeemer! He took our sin upon Himself. He suffered the punishment of it. He has put the sin away. Believing in Him our sin has gone! We have a right to peace, we are fully warranted in standing before God and may ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

What we want is not to think of this as a dreamy thing, which may or may not be, but to realize it as a fact quite as sure, quite as certain

as our distress and the sin which caused it. We are not to look through the storm upon the Savior and view Him as though He were a will-o'-the-wisp, a ghostly thing--while the storm that surrounds us is real--but to see a real Savior for real sin, and to rejoice in real pardon, a pardon which has buried all our sins. A real salvation, a salvation which has set our feet upon a rock beyond the reach of harm. Brethren, if we came to this point about sin we should have less of the groaning, or if as much of the groaning, we should still have more of the rejoicing. We lament for sin, and we do well. I hope we shall till we reach the gates of Heaven. Sin can never be too much lamented or repented of. But at the same time we are not to so mourn over sin as to forget that Jesus died, and thereby cancelled all our guilt. No, with every note of lamentation lift up the joyful strain of triumph, for iniquity is gone, Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and he that believes in Him is not condemned, neither can he be, world without end.

The same remarks apply to the matter of our acceptance with God after our pardon. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if I may speak for the rest of you, our shortcomings in Christian duty are often very painfully real to our souls. We cannot preach a sermon, or offer prayer, or give alms, or do any service for our Lord but what we feel, when all is done, that we are unprofitable servants. The faults and imperfections of our service stare us in the face and there is not a day we live but what we are compelled to say that we come very far short of what Christians should be. In fact, we are led sometimes to question whether we can be Christians at all, and very rightly are we anxious as to the truthfulness of our professions.

When we come to the Lord's Table and examine ourselves, we find many causes of disquietude, and much reason for trembling of spirit. Looking

through the whole course of our Christian career, shame must cover our faces. We have good need to say, "Not unto us, not unto us be glory." We cannot suppose ourselves able to take any glory, our life has been so inglorious, so undeserving, so Hell-deserving. And there are some Christians to whom this state of things is very, very, very, very painfully conspicuous. They are of a desponding turn of mind, much given to looking within, and their inward corruptions and the outward displays thereof cause them continued disquietude and alarm.

My Brethren, there is so much that is good about all this, that who shall condemn it? But at the same time the sacred balance of the soul must be maintained. Are my shortcomings real? Equally real is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ in which all Believers always stand! Are my prayers imperfect? Yes. But equally perfect and prevalent are the prayers and intercessions of my great Advocate before the Throne! Am I defiled with sin, and therefore worthy to be rejected? Is that true? Equally true is it that in Him is no sin! And His eternal merits have weight with the ever-blessed Father and stand me in as good a place as He, my Representative and Surety, standing before the Throne.

Yes. I am in myself unworthy, but I am accepted in the Beloved. "I am black with sin." "Yes," says the Believer, "it is so." Add, however, the next clause, "but comely." Equally sure it is that we are comely, yes, in God's sight, we are "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." As Jehovah sees us in Christ Jesus, He beholds no iniquity in us. Christ has put our blemishes away, and made us comely in His comeliness. He sees everything that is lovely in us. Christ has bestowed His own beauty upon us, for He is made this day of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

All we want is in Christ. Our standing is safe in Him, and the love of

the Father towards us comes to us without diminution at any time despite our flaws and failures, through the perfection of the Beloved One's acceptance. Now do not cloud this fact. Do not look at the Lord, your righteousness, as a phantom. Do not cry out as if you thought His work to be an impalpable something that comforts others, but cannot comfort you. The work of Jesus is the grandest of all facts. O for faith to grasp it, and rely upon it as such!

The principle applies next in the matter of sanctification. Very real and close to our souls, my Brethren, is the flesh. It makes us groan daily, being burdened. Very close to home are our corruptions--these foes of our own household worry us too much to allow us to forget them. Very plain to us also are our temptations--they await us on all sides. And the inward conflict which comes of our fallen nature, and the temptations of Satan and the world--this, too, is very clear. We can no more doubt our conflicts than the wounded soldier doubts the bloodiness of the battle. All these things are evermore before our eyes to our grief.

But I am afraid that here, too, Christ Jesus is often to us as merely an apparition and not as a real Sharer in our spiritual conflicts. Know you not, Beloved, that Jesus Christ is touched with tender sympathy for you in all your temptations? Understand you not that He has prepared provision for you in all your conflicts that you may surely win the day? Expect you not even yet to say, "I have overcome through the blood of the Lamb"? Will you not at this hour shout the anticipatory note of triumph, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory though our Lord Jesus Christ"? You have corruptions within--this is a fact. But Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory--this is an equal fact.

There is that in you which would destroy you, but there is also that implanted in you which cannot be destroyed-- this is equally true. You

are, in the first Adam, made in the image of the earthy--over this you lament. But in the Second Adam you already begin to bear the image of the heavenly, and you shall perfectly bear it before long. Can you not grasp this? Alas, we do not lay hold of these things, do not get to say, as the Apostle John did, "which we have seen, with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life." Too much is this with us a doctrine to be accepted because we are taught it, a matter to be received because some other persons have experienced it, but too little is it a subject of inward living experience. For you and me to know by blessed realization that it is so, that the Holy Spirit sent forth from the Father is IN US and WITH US, and that Christ will overcome our sin within us by the power of the cleansing water which flowed with the blood from His side, and will as much deliver us from the power of sin, as He has already saved us from the guilt of sin--this is heavenly experience, indeed.

We must not forget to illustrate this state of mind, also, by the condition of many saints when under trial. How often when the storms are out, and our poor boat is filling, do we realize everything but what we should! We are like the disciples on the Galilean lake. The ship is real--ah, how the timbers creak! The sea is real--how the hungry waves leap up to destroy them! The winds are real--see how the canvas is rent to ribbons, how the mast bends like a bow! Their own discomforts are real--wet to the skin with the spray--and drenched and cold are they all! Their dangers are real--the ship must certainly go down with all on board!

Everything is real but the Master walking on the waves. And yet, Beloved, there was nothing so real in all that storm as the Master. All else might be a matter of deception to them, but He was real and true. All else did change, and pass away, and subside into calm--but He

remained the same. Now observe how often we are in a similar condition. Our wretched circumstances--the bare cupboard, our bodily weakness, the loss of that dear child or parent. All the distresses that await us, the dread of bankruptcy, or poverty--all these seem real. But that word, "I am with you," appears often in such circumstances to be a matter of belief, certainly, but not a matter of realization.

And that promise, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"--we dare not deny it, but we are not comforted by it to the degree we should be, because we do not grip it, grasp it, know it. The holy children in the fire knew they were in the fire, but they were safe because they knew to an equal certainty that the Son of Man was there with them. And so in the furnace you know that, "no trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous." But know equally well that where Jesus is the trial is blessed, and the affliction has a sweetness in it unknown to anything beside.

I shall only illustrate this in two other points. My dear Brethren, in the matter of death--I do not know whether you can all think of death without a shudder. I am afraid there are not many of us who can. It is very easy to sing, when we are here on Sundays rejoicing with all our Brethren--

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, And cast a wishful eye."

I am afraid, I am afraid, I am afraid we would rather live than die, after all. A missionary told me the story of an old Negro woman in Jamaica who used to be continually singing, "Angel Gabriel, come and take Aunty Betsy home to Glory." But when some wicked wag knocked at the door in the dead of night, and told her the angel Gabriel was come for Aunty Betsy, she said, "She lives next door."

I am afraid it may possibly be so with us--that though we think we wish

the waves of Jordan to divide that we may be landed on the other shore--we linger on the bank shivering. It is so. We dread to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay. We cast many "a longing, lingering look behind." But why is it? It is all because we realize the dying bed, the death sweat, the pangs, the glazing eye--we often realize what never turns out to be reality--but do not realize what are sure to be realities, namely, the angelic watchers at the bedside waiting to act as a convoy to bear our spirits up through tracts unknown of purest ether.

We do not realize the presence of the Savior receiving saints into His bosom that they may rest there until the trumpet of the archangel sounds. We do not really grasp the rising again--

"From beds of dust and silent clay, To realms of everlasting day."

If we did, then our songs about dying would be more true and our readiness to depart more abiding. For what is death? It is a pin's prick at the worst, often scarcely that--the shutting of our eyes on earth and the opening of them in Heaven! So rapid is the departure of the Believer's soul from the body here to the Presence of the Lord yonder, that death is scarcely anything--it is swallowed up in victory. O for the realization, then, of Jesus, and death would lose all its sting. And once again, and this is the last illustration I will give on this point--I am afraid that in Christian work we very often fall into the same style of doubt. Here is an enterprise, and straightway if we are wise we realize the difficulties. If we are something more than wise we exaggerate these difficulties and conclude that with our slender means we shall never be able to grapple with them. But ah, why is it that we so seldom think of the living present Savior, who is the Church's Head? Calculate the forces of the Church if you will, but do not forget the most important item of all--the Omnipotence of the Lord

her King.

Reckon up, if you will, all the weakness of her pastors, and teachers, and Evangelists and members. But when you have done that, don't think you have calculated all her resources--you have only considered the very fringe of them! The main body and the strength of the Church lies in the fullness of the Godhead bodily which dwells in the Person of Jesus Christ. Shall heathendom be real? Shall priest-craft be real? Shall Romanism be real? Shall the corruption of the human heart and the alienation of the human will be real? And shall I not equally realize the Omnipotence of Christ, in the realm of spirit, and the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit, who can turn men from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God?

Let not Christ be a phantom to His Church. In her worst hours, though tossed like a ship in the storm, let her Lord, as He walks the waves, be real to her and she will do and dare right valiantly. And the results will be glorious. Thus much on the first point.

II. Secondly, the worst of it is that WE MAKE CHRIST A PHANTOM MOST WHEN HE IS MOST REALLY CHRIST, most really revealed as the Son of the Highest. Observe, my dear Brethren, when our Lord Jesus Christ walked on the land by the seashore, none of His disciples ever said, "It is a ghost." None of them said, "It is an apparition." Yet they did not see Christ when He walked on the shore, on terra firma. They saw His Manhood, that was all. There was no more to be seen of Christ as He walked there than there is to be seen of any other--simply a Man, no Godhead is there revealed.

But when Christ walked on the waves, there was more of Christ visible than there was on the land. Then they saw His Manhood, but they also saw His Godhead, who could make the liquid waves hold Him up. There was most of Christ to be seen, and yet then they saw the least. Is it not

strange where He uncovers most, we see least? Where He reveals Himself most clearly, our unbelieving eye is least able to see? Yet, mark you, Christ is never so truly Christ anywhere as when He works beyond the ordinary course of Nature. He is Christ if He takes a little child upon His knee and blesses it, but more of the Christ is seen when He puts His hand upon the damsel, and raises her from the dead, or calls Lazarus out of the tomb.

He is the Christ when He speaks a gentle word to a sorrowing heart, but oh, what a Christ He is when He says, "Winds be hushed, and waves be still"! Then is His Glory laid open to faith's strengthened eye. Truly He is most Himself when He is most above all others--when, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above our thoughts--and His ways above our ways. And, Brethren, we have never seen Christ unless we have seen Him far above all others, and acting beyond the bounds of expectation and reasoning. The Christ is half hidden when He acts as another man.

The whole Christ does not appear in the ordinary run of our affairs. It is in the extraordinary, the unusual, the unexpected, that we view the Glory of Christ, and see Him fully. So it is that we refuse most to discern and glorify Him when He is most openly displayed. Let me show you what I mean. Christ, I say, walking on the sea, is most of all Christ there-- and yet His disciples do not perceive Him. So in the pardon of very great sin you see the most of Christ. Yet whenever a man has fallen into a great sin, that is, a vile sin in the esteem of others, then he says, "Ah, now I cannot be forgiven this." Why, Man, Jesus is most truly Jesus when He pardons grievous iniquity!

The putting away of your little transgressions, as you have thought them to be--do you think this is all He came for--to redeem such as have a little fallen and a little transgressed? Is He a little Savior

for little sinners to be little worshipped? Oh, but here He comes to be Christ in deed and in Truth, when bloody murders, black adulteries, scarlet blasphemies, and crimson filthinesses are all washed away by His blood. Then we see Him as "a Savior and a great one," as One who is "mighty to save."

Why is it that we will not discern Him when He abundantly pardons? Why, my Brethren, do we honor Him as He should be honored, if we only think that the sentimentalism of sin is put away by Him? If we own that the reality, the filthiness, the damnableness of sin is put away by Jesus, and trust Him when our sins seem blackest, foulest, most abhorrent, then we do Him honor and see Him to be the Christ He is.

So again in great distresses of the soul. It pleases God often after conversion to allow the fountains of the great deeps of our corruption to be broken up, and we never felt before as we do then. We had not expected this, and are overwhelmed with surprise to find ourselves such corrupt, such deceitful, such foul things. Then at the same time Satan will invade the heart with fierce temptations and diabolical insinuations, and, alas, our suspicious spirits will imagine that Jesus Himself cannot help us in such a condition!

Oh, but Man, now is the time for the Divine manifestation! Now shall you see the Christ! Do you suppose that the Lord Jesus comes only to speak peace to those who have peace already? Or to give peace to those enduring a trifling disturbance of mind? Man, do you think Jesus a superfluity? Or do you imagine that He is only suited for little occasions? Be ashamed of such insinuations! For He reigns on high above tremendous storms. He rules the largest waves and the most roaring floods--when all our nature is vexed, when our hopes are gone, and our despair is uppermost--it is amid the tumult of such a tempest that He says, "Peace, be still," and creates a calm.

Believe in the Christ who can save you when your temptations most threaten to swallow you up. Do not think Him to be only able to save when you are not in extremities, but believe Him to be best seen when your uttermost calamities are near.

I might select many other cases as illustrating this, but I will run over one or two in rapid review. We are, perhaps, enduring an unusually severe trial and need more than usual support. But we fearfully say, "I cannot expect to be supported under this affliction." Ah, your Christ is a phantom, then. If you saw Him, you would know that there is nothing too hard for Him--that the sustenance of a soul, when it is at its lowest famine point--is easy enough work for the Divine Consoler. And you would cast yourself on Him believingly and not act towards Him as you now do. Yes, but you need great supplies for the present time of distress. Your circumstances are trying to the last degree.

Do not, now that you need great supplies, make Christ to be poor and stinting in your esteem. But rather, like Abraham, say, "The Lord will provide." Abraham, in extremity, when about to slay his son by God's command, finds that God interposes and the ram is found for a burnt-offering. In your worst poverty Christ will interpose. Jesus will prove Himself to be the Lord of Heaven and earth. You shall see that in Him all fullness dwells. Can you only rely upon Jesus in little and ordinary troubles? I know it is sweet to run to Him in such times, but is He to be only an ordinary, fair-weather Friend to cover you from little showers, and walk with you when a little gale is blowing?

Will He refuse to be with you in stormy weather, or to traverse with you the boisterous sea? O do not so miserably spirit away the Savior! Do not pantomime the Redeemer when you want Him in very deed. You have real poverty, and a real cross, and real difficulties. Now in the mount of the Lord shall it be seen that He is true to His Word, and His name,

Jehovah-Jireh, across the darkness of your want shall be written as with letters of fire.

In times of great danger, again, we sometimes gloomily mutter, "Now we shall not be preserved. Christ has kept us up till now, and we quite believe that He would do so if the circumstances of today were no worse than those of times gone by. But now we are extremely tempted, now we are violently assailed, now our sorrows multiply--will He help us now?" Dare you say, "Will He?" when you know that He cannot change? Dare you say, "Can He?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? Are you going to make your Savior into a mere appearance? He is a real Savior--lean on Him. He will bring you safely through--cover yourself with His shield--and keep off the fiery darts from you.

He will not leave you or forsake you. Great deliverances! Ah, we fancy that these will never occur--Jesus will not work these as before, so we wickedly imagine. And if they are worked, we are like Peter, who could not realize his escape from prison. He knew the saints had prayed for him, but when he was delivered from the prison and found himself in the street of the city, he could not think it was a fact! He "knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision." Often before God has delivered us, we have said, "it cannot be"--our Christ was only a ghost. And when He has delivered us we have said, "I do not understand it, I am overwhelmed with amazement." The fact being that we do not get such a grip of Christ as to be assured that He is real, present, mighty, gracious. Or if we did, we should receive even His greatest deliverances as natural proofs of His goodness and greatness--such as faith is warranted to expect. "Is it not surprising," said one, "that God should have heard my prayers, and have been so gracious to me in Providence?" "No," said an old saint, whose long experience had taught her more of the Lord, "it does not surprise

me, it is just like He--it is His way with His people."

Oh, to feel that great mercy is like He! That it is what we should expect of God--that He should give great deliverances--should walk the waters of our griefs and bid them cease their raging! It is a blessed faith which enables us to recognize Jesus on the waters, and to say, "I know it is Jesus. Nobody but Jesus could act so wondrously. I might not have known Him if I had seen Him working in an ordinary way, or traveling like a common wayfarer. But here amidst extraordinary seasons I expected His help. If I never had seen Him before, I expected to see Him now. And now I do see Him, and I am not amazed, though I am delighted. I looked for Him, and knew that when my need of Him was greatest, His coming would be sure." When faith brightens the eye of hope with the flash of expectation, joy is not far away.

I will only add that if we will but realize Christ, our great successes which will be sure to come over spiritual foes within, and over difficulties without, will again infallibly prove to us His reality.

But the probabilities are that we shall think Him not capable of giving us such great successes. And we shall toil on despondingly where we ought to have rejoiced in the Lord. As to our ultimate future we have too often thought it will be hard to die. We have trembled at standing before the Judgment Seat. We have read of the Day of Judgment, and thought, "How shall I bear it?" forgetting that we shall know our Redeemer better in death than before! And in the Resurrection and in the Glory that shall follow we shall see Him more clearly revealed than now. And therefore we ought to think more of Him and lean upon Him in all the great concerns of eternity with a great, a confident, and childlike faith.

III. But I must pass on to the third head. OUR GREATEST SORROWS ARISE FROM OUR TREATING OUR

LORD AS UNREAL. It is because of our weakening, vaporizing, and spiriting our Lord away, and making Him into a myth so often--instead of gripping Him with a commonsense, practical, firm, realizing faith--that we suffer so much from our troubles. For, Brothers and Sisters, it is a sad cause of trouble to have a phantom Redeemer, a Savior who cannot actually pardon sin when it comes to be great sin. A Savior who gives us only a little indefinite hope about our guilt, but does not literally put it away. This is the seedbed of all manner of evil weeds. I do not wonder if you are vexed with doubts and fears if you have not realized Christ. O that you would all learn to sing with Hart these precious lines--

"A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side.
(It is no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak.
The same dear Man in Heaven now reigns,
That suffered for our sake).
This wondrous Mian, of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God!
He bought our souls from death and Hell,
The price, His own heart's blood." Beware, my Brethren, of resting content with anything short of faith in an actual, literal, living Mediator--for nothing but reality will be of any use to you in the matter. Of course, with a phantom Savior for real sins, an apparition of a Redeemer for real bondage--you cannot find comfort. Of what use is the appearance of bread and the resemblance of water to famishing pilgrims in the desert? If you have a phantom helper for real woes you

are the worse for such help. If your Savior does not actually and practically support you in times of need, and supply your wants and console you under depression, then in what respects are you better off than those who have no helper at all?

Jesus is a Friend, indeed. His Grace, love, and Presence, are no fictions--of all facts they are most sure. If I have to carry a real load, and then have a ghost to assist me, I am in reality unassisted. We want true power, force, and energy, in our Helper, and all that, Faith sees in Jesus, her Lord. But you will readily see how sorrows multiply where Jesus is lightly esteemed.

Besides, to some Christ is not only, as it were, an impalpable spirit, but He is really an indifferent, unfeeling spirit. Jesus to His disciples on the sea seemed as though He would have gone by them and left them to their fate! And we often dream that our gracious Lord is unmindful of us--at any rate, we forget that he is tenderly mindful of our case. It did not strike you when you were so poor last week that Jesus knew it, and was grieved for your affliction? You forgot, dear Brother, when you were trembling as you went into the pulpit, that Jesus knew you trembled, and would uphold you while hearing your testimony. Too seldom do we remember that--

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

Ah, good Husband, you knew your wife pitied you. You noted well the teardrop when she saw your grief. Ah, dear Child, you knew your mother sorrowed for you. Ah, but if you did but know Christ, you would know this, too--that He never puts you to an unnecessary pain, nor ever tries you with an unneeded trial. There is a needs be for all, and He has sympathy for you in all.

Many a poor sinner even imagines Jesus to be an angry spirit, and he cries out for fear. He imagines that Jesus is wrathful and will reject

him with indignation. Ah, you do not truly realize my Savior if you think He would ever reject anyone who came to Him. When on earth, what a real Physician of souls He was! He mingled with publicans and sinners. He did not talk about them as people who ought to be looked after, but He actually went after them Himself and suffered one of them to wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. He was likely to touch diseased sinners with His fingers as He healed them.

He was not an amateur Savior. He did not come into this world to save us from suppositions sin and imaginary trouble. There is nothing which is more overlooked, but which ought to be better remarked about our Lord, than His com-monsense practicalness. He is utterly devoid of sham and pretense. He is always in the Gospel history as real as the scenes of life around Him. He never strikes you as theatrical and pretentious. May we all feel that He is really a loving Savior, a tender Savior, and a practical Savior to us. May you know Him. May you realize Him--and then your sorrows will either come to an end or be accepted with thanksgiving.

IV. Lastly, IF WE COULD BUT BE CURED OF THIS DESPERATE MISCHIEF, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WOULD HAVE A HIGHER PLACE IN OUR ESTEEM. AND MANY BENEFICIAL RESULTS WOULD FOLLOW.

For, first, did you notice that after the disciples knew it to be Christ, and He came into the ship with them, they said, "Of a Truth you are the Son of God"? If you once realize Christ, you will know Him in His Person as you never will know Him by all I can tell you, or you can read about Him.

You once read about a man. You saw his likeness in the "Illustrated News," you heard people talk about him. At last you were in his company, and sat down with him. and then you said, "Now I know the man.

I did not before." Oh, if you
can realize Christ so as to draw near to Him by faith, you will feel
that you now begin to know Him in Truth, and, what is best, you will
know Him then with assurance.
They said, "Of a Truth you are the Son of God." You were persuaded that
He is God by what you found in Scripture. But when you came to see Him.
When He became real to you, the doctrine of His Deity needed no
arguments to support it. The Truth that Jesus Christ is Lord is then
woven into your very being. He is the Son of God to you, if to no one
else. What did those mariner disciples do when they saw that it was,
indeed, Jesus who trod the wave? It is added, "They worshipped Him."
You will never worship a phantom, an image, an apparition. Know Jesus
to be real, and straightway you prostrate yourself before Him. Blessed
God, blessed Son of Man, coming from Heaven for me! Bleeding for me,
standing in Glory, pleading for me! I had thought of You and heard of
You, but now I see You! What can I do but worship You? It is the
grasping of Christ that produces devotion. It is the mistiness of our
thoughts about Him that is the root of our undevout frames of mind. God
give us a firm hold of Christ, and we shall instinctively adore Him.
They not only worshipped Christ, but they served Him. Their worship was
such that whatever He bade them do they did it. And the vessel was
steered where He would until it brought Him to the other side where He
wished to go. They who realize Christ are sure to obey Him. I cannot
obey that which floats before me like a cloud. But when I see the Man,
the God, and know Him to be as real a Person as myself--as much a
matter-of-fact existence as my brother--then what He bids me do I do.
My obedience becomes real just in proportion as the Master who commands
it becomes real to my soul. Then it is, dear Friends, that we become
humbled in spirit. No man realizes Christ without also realizing

himself, and being bowed down in self-humiliation. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you: why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

But with the humility comes a deep and profound joy and peace. With Christ in the vessel, known to be there, we smile at the storm. Whether it continues or subsides, we are equally peaceful now that we have realized that Christ is with us. I do believe that the actualizing of their Lord is the main thing that Christians want. They require, first and foremost, a real Leader. They want to grasp His reality and feel His actual power. And is it necessary for this that He should come here in Person? I trust not. If He were to appear this morning on this platform, and His servant should hide his head, you would say, "Behold the glorious sight, yonder is our Lord."

I know your heads would bow to worship, and then you would open your eyes and gaze on Him, and feast your souls with the sight, and then each one would say, "What can I do for Him?" And if the condescending Master gave you each leave to come and spread offerings at the feet of the Crucified, oh, what heaps of treasure would be brought! Each one would feel, "I have not with me what I wish," but you would say, "Take all I have, my blessed Lord, for You have redeemed me with Your blood."

Is not He just as dear to you now, though unseen? Is not faith as mighty a faculty as sight? Is it not "the evidence of things not seen"? Is not Wesley's verse true? --

"The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason's glimmering ray;
With strong commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.
Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;

The invisible appears in sight,

And God is seen by mortal eye." Does not faith make Jesus as real to us as our sight would do? It should do so. I pray it may. And then see how true will be your consecration, how abundant will be your service, how ready your thanksgiving, how abounding your offerings!

May God grant you Grace to get into this true position, both you who are saints and you who still are sinners--for in having a real Christ you will have the reality of every good. God give it to you for Jesus' sake. Amen and Amen.

Chapter 50

Dei Gratia

(No. 958)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 30, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To the praise of the glory of His Grace." Ephesians 1:6.

NO Truth of God is more plainly taught in God's Word than this, that the salvation of sinners is entirely owing to the Grace of God. If there is anything clear at all in Scripture, it is plainly there declared that men are lost by their own works but saved through the free favor of God. Their ruin is justly merited, but their salvation is always the result of the unmerited mercy of God. In varied forms of expression, but with constant clearness and positiveness, this Truth is over and over again declared. Yet, plain as this Truth is, and influencing as it should be in every part of our doctrinal belief, it is frequently forgotten.

Many of the heresies which divide the Christian Church, spring from a confusion upon this point. Were that word "Grace" but fully read, marked, and learned, the great evangelical system would be far more firmly held, and plainly preached. But forgetfulness that "by Grace you are saved," is a common fault among all conditions of men. Sinners forget it, and they seek salvation by the works of the Law. They refuse to surrender to the Sovereign Grace of God, and entrench themselves behind the tottering fence of their own righteousness.

And saints forget this, too, and therefore their minds become dark, their spirits fall into legal bondage, and where they ought to rejoice in the Lord unceasingly, they become despondent and full of unbelieving

dread. Brethren, I am incessantly preaching here the Doctrines of Grace, they are growingly dear to me--and as often as I preach them, I trust they are not wearisome to you. And if they should be, that sad fact would not induce me to be silent upon them, but rather urge me to proclaim them more frequently and fervently! Your weariness of them would be a clear proof that you required to hear them yet again, and again, and again, until your souls were brought to delight in them. There is no music out of Heaven equal to the sound of that word "Grace," save only the celestial melody of the name of Jesus. One of the early fathers was called the angelic doctor--surely he is most angelic who preaches most of Grace. Grace among the attributes is the Chrysostom, it has a golden mouth. It is the Barnabas, for it is full of consolation. It is the Boanerges, for it thunders against self-righteousness. It is man's star of hope, the wellspring of his eternal life, the seed of his future bliss.

I. We shall draw from the text our first observation--IN SALVATION AS A WHOLE WE SEE THE GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE. So the Apostle tells us, "To the praise of the glory of His Grace." Every attribute of God has its own appropriate opportunity for displaying itself. To each quality of the Divine Nature there is a glory, and the Lord takes care that there shall be a time when this glory shall be so seen as to become the subject of praise to intelligent creatures.

There is great glory in His power, and long ago He who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, made the heavens and the earth. It was a great triumph of power, and other grand attributes combined to make the display still more glorious. Wisdom was there to balance the clouds. Prudence set a compass upon the face of the deep. Truth appointed the times and the seasons, and Goodness arranged the habitable parts of the earth for the living creatures and for the sons

of men.

All the attributes of God were exercised, but power was greatly magnified, the power which by a word created, and by its mere will made all things to stand forth. On that occasion, when the glory of God's power was revealed, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They saw the glory of the Divine power, and rendered their joyful homage. On that august occasion many of God's attributes were extolled, but there was no room for "the praise of the glory of His Grace."

Grace found no objects in a pure creation upon which to display its full glory. There was room for kindness, benevolence, favor, goodness, and love--but Divine Grace in its true and deepest meaning needs undeserving creatures to oper-

ate upon, sinful creatures that may be pardoned, fallen creatures that may be restored, justified--and there were none such condemned creatures that may be in the creation as it came from the Divine hand.

Further on, the Lord took occasion to give a display of the glory of His Justice. We know not precisely when or how, for the record is not full and clear. But we have the outlines--there was once a great rebellion in Heaven. Certain of those bright intelligences known to us as angels, for some reason or other, revolted from the Divine government under the leadership of that bright son of the morning, who is now forever called the Prince of Darkness.

There was war in Heaven against the rule of the Eternal. Then flew forth the thunderbolts of Jehovah's strength, and the rebels were subdued at once by His irresistible might. Then His Justice flamed forth in splendor, for we read of the pit that was dug for the wicked, and of everlasting fire in Hell prepared for the devil and his angels. Hurled from the battlements of Heaven, they fell into the deeps of

perdition. Driven from the throne of their glory, they became hopeless wanderers throughout the realms of misery.

The praise of the glory of Divine Justice may be read in these terrible lines, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day." Divine Justice shall yet further be displayed in that tremendous day when the Great White Throne shall be set, and all nations shall be gathered before it, and the unjust shall receive the vengeance due for their rebellion against the majesty of God.

Glorious shall be the attribute of Justice, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

In all this we see no revelation of "the glory of His Grace." To fallen angels He dealt out Justice. Upon them Holiness shot forth her consuming fire, but no word of Mercy was heard, no hope of restoration was given. The Mediator took not up the angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham. So, too, in the last dread assize, Justice, not Mercy, shall rule the hour. He shall render unto every man according to his works. Still, there must be an opportunity to glorify the attribute of Grace. Whenever we can clearly perceive that an attribute exists in God, we may fairly infer that there will be something for that attribute to exercise itself upon.

It is always a hopeful circumstance that there is mercy in God, and that this mercy endures forever. For it seems to be inevitable that mercy should be exercised, and therefore when we see sin in the world

we expect to see mercy displaying its power. Yonder I see in the surgeon's dispensary a potent remedy, and it suggests to me that a certain disease falls under his eyes, and when it is raging I naturally look to see the remedy much in use. When you read of Grace in the heart of God, of pity, of free favor, of Sovereign Mercy, it is clearly implied that there would be guilty ones upon whom that free favor would in due time be bestowed.

Accordingly, we find that God has selected the salvation of the sons of men as the platform for the exhibition of His Grace--that in His elect His Grace may show forth its glory, just as in other events the glory of His power or of His Justice has been shown. I want you to note that a display of the glory of any attribute is not a more proof that such an attribute exists--but an unusual revealing and magnifying of that attribute--so that it excites the attention and wonder of all beholders.

Let me go back again to a display of power and remind you of a memorable event in the history of this world during our own historical period. We read of Pharaoh, "For this purpose have I raised you up, that I might show forth My power in you." Pharaoh, a man of a peculiarly determined disposition, of a high and haughty spirit--resolved to resist the commands of Jehovah and to hold Israel in bondage. Jehovah ordained to reveal in him what His power could do. After first having warned him by his servants, Moses and Aaron, who worked great wonders in his presence, the Lord began to deal with the haughty king.

He turned the waters of Egypt into blood, and slew their fish. The land brought forth frogs in abundance in the chambers of their kings. "He spoke, and there came many sorts of flies, and lice in all their borders. He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He

smote their vines also, and their fig trees. And broke the trees of their coasts. He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground."

He sent a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt. The king's heart was cowed for awhile, but in desperate obstinacy he hardened his heart yet more, put on a brazen forehead and again said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey His voice? I will not let His people go." Volley after volley the artillery of Heaven was discharged upon him. The Lord mighty in battle gave His enemy no respite. One by one He brought up His reserves, and fitted fresh arrows upon His bow. The lordly monarch found himself stunned with the repeated blows, and bewildered by the terrors of his Omnipotent Adversary.

At last the masterstroke was given which brought the tyrant to his knees. The angel of destruction was sent to smite all the first-born of Egypt. And an exceeding great and bitter cry went up from every household in that dread night--for all the first-born were slain, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat upon the throne, to the first-born of the woman servant behind the mill. Then it was that the astonished monarch rose up in the night and said to Moses and Aaron, "Rise up, and get you forth from my people, and go serve the Lord as you have said."

Yet, before long, Pharaoh hardened his heart again, and pursued after the Israelites with horses and with chariots. You know the story, but we will rehearse it yet again, for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and His mighty acts which were of old are to be had in perpetual remembrance. Even in Heaven they shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Let us, then, rehearse it here below.

You remember how Pharaoh in his pride pursued the children of Israel,

saving, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My lust shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." In his high presumption he dared to follow the chosen of the Lord into the heart of the sea. Then "the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drove them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

But in vain they turned themselves to flee, for in a moment when Moses stretched forth his rod, the waters, at the command of God, returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the hosts of Pharaoh. They sank like lead in the mighty waters, the depths covered them, there was not one of them left. Then was seen the glory of Jehovah's power, and then was heard the praise of that glory, for Miriam took her timbrel, and went forth in the dance, while the daughters of Israel followed her. And all the hosts of Israel took up the refrain of her song, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and the rider has He thrown into the sea." Then was made known the praise of the glory of Jehovah's power.

Now, Brethren, in the work of the salvation of man you have a parallel case, for one attribute is not more glorious than another. "The praise of the glory of His Grace" in rescuing man from the deep ruin into which he had fallen, in giving the Well-Beloved to bleed and die, in routing sin, death, and Hell--in leading our captivity captive, in uplifting us into Heaven, and giving us to be partakers of His glory through the merit of Jesus Christ our Lord--in all this, I say, Grace is as glorious as was power at the Red Sea. No stinted thing, then. No small matter, no subject to be whispered of, or described with bated

breath--but something great and grand and glorious will that work of salvation be--which is to the praise of the glory of so great and favorite an attribute as the Grace of God!

I have tried, if I could, to think of what Grace at its utmost must be. But who by searching can find out God? It is not possible for the human mind to conceive of power at its utmost. Pharaoh's overthrow gives you but a guess at what the Omnipotence of the Lord can accomplish. It can shake all worlds to dust, dissolve the universe, and annihilate creation. Power at its utmost, who shall compass it? And Grace, my Brethren, Grace at its utmost! I was about to say you see it in the Lord Jesus. And shall I err if I so speak? For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.

But, my Brethren, our minds cannot see the utmost power of Grace--human intellect is not gigantic enough to grasp it all--but believe me, if anywhere the full praise of the glory of God's Grace is seen, it is beheld in the salvation of the chosen sons of men. When all the chosen ones shall be gathered together, and the Church of God in Heaven shall be perfect, not one living stone lacking of the entire fabric--then across that edifice shall this inscription be written in letters of light, "To the praise of the glory of His Grace."

The work of salvation from first to last, as a whole, was devised and carried out and shall be perfected to the praise of the glory of the Grace of God. Thus much upon the first head. Salvation is of the Lord, and in it Grace reigns without a rival!

II. Secondly, THIS IS TRUE OF EACH DETAIL OF SALVATION. I gather that from the position of my text. The fifth verse speaks of predestination and adoption, and the sixth verse speaks of acceptance in the Beloved. The position of my text puts all three of these under the same

mark--they are all "to the praise of the glory of His Grace." Brethren, the sea is salt as a whole, and every drop of it is salt in its degree--if the whole work of salvation is of Grace, every detail of that work is equally of Grace.

The rays of the sun as a whole possess certain properties. Analyze one single sunbeam and you shall find all those properties there. I have just now said that the whole of salvation might be resembled to a great temple, and that across its front would be written, "To the praise of the glory of His Grace." Now some of the ancient Eastern buildings were erected by certain monarchs and were dedicated to them. Not only was the whole pile set up to their honor, but each separate brick was stamped with the royal cartouche or coat of arms. Not only the whole structure, but each separate brick bore the impress of the builder.

So is it in the matter of salvation--the whole is of Grace, and each particular portion of it equally manifests in its measure the free favor of God. Let me begin at the beginning, and very briefly rehearse the different steps of the salvation of a sinner. There was, first of all, the election of men by God before all time. He it was who chose unto Himself a people to show forth His praise. That choice was not made in any degree on account of any debt due to man, on account of any merit that existed in men or was foreseen to exist. It was the result offree favor on God's part that any were chosen to become His sons and daughters.

"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight," is the Savior's answer to the question why God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. If any man is chosen, it is not because of a natural worthiness or claim to preference--or any essential excellence in him which demanded that God should make the choice. We were heirs of wrath even as others. No works were taken into

account whatever. The Divine choice, according to Paul in the ninth of Romans was, "not of works, but of Him that calls." "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."

This is clearer still, perhaps, when we come to the next step, namely, that of redemption. Christ has redeemed His people from the curse of the Law, having been made a curse for them. Can any man see the Son of God expiring upon Calvary, bearing the sins of man, and say that those for whom He died were worthy that Christ should die for them? It is downright blasphemy to connect any idea of merit with a gift so vast and free as the gift of Jesus Christ to redeem us from our sins! Why, Sirs, had we, every one of us, been perfect, and had we kept God's Laws without omission, even as seraphs do in Heaven, we should still have only done what was our duty to have done.

There could have been no merit about our service which could deserve that Christ should die for us. Should the Eternal God ever be thought to be such a debtor to His creatures that He must veil His splendor in human form and be despised and rejected and spit upon? Shall it be said that the Son of God owes to man that He should bleed and die for them? I shudder while I raise the question or suggest the thought! It must be pure, spontaneous, disinterested mercy that nailed the Savior to the tree. Nothing could have brought Him from the Throne of Glory to the Cross of woe but Grace, unalloyed, unbounded Grace.

And when I turn onwards from redemption to the next step, namely, that of our effectual calling, it is the same. God is pleased to call many of us by the Word of the Gospel, and every Gospel call is a gracious thing, for we do not deserve to be called away from our sins. If we reject those calls, and resist them--and yet, after all, the effectual Grace of God comes in a more powerful way and makes the unwilling willing and corrects the obstinacy of our hearts--why, this must be

Grace emphatically!

The common call of the Gospel to every sinner to come to Christ, and to believe in Him and live--which call is given in the Gospel every day--is Grace. But to continue that call, and to make it effectual, even to those who have up to now resisted it, why, this is Grace upon Grace, super-abounding Grace! If you spread a table for the hungry, that is a favor to them. If you invite them to come, and invite again and again, it is great favor. But if you "compel them to come in," as the parable has it, and bid them sit there and lay yourself out until you have won their hearts and persuaded them to accept your bounty--this is mercy upon mercy! Yet such is effectual calling. That ever the love of God should have constrained you and me to come and be saved when we so long stood out against it--oh, this is "to the praise of the glory of
His Grace."

My dear Brethren, take the next step from effectual calling to pardon and justification. I think it is not necessary that I should say that the pardon of sin must always be the effect of Grace. That statement is self-evident. It cannot be due to any man that he should have his sins pardoned, for sin that deserves a pardon is no sin. It cannot be due to any man that God should make him righteous, he being himself unrighteous. That must be a spontaneous action on God's part, flowing from His pure bounty and love. No man can claim forgiveness, it were sacrilege to suggest that he could.

Pardon and justification, then, must be freely given us by God's Grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Mark you well that the next series of steps which we call sanctification, or perseverance, or better still, gracious conservation--all of those must be of Grace, too. No man has any claim upon God to keep him from going into sin. I

am bound to keep from sin--it is my duty--but for God to send me Grace by which I am enabled to keep from sin, is no right of mine.

It must be His free love that does it. And if from day to day He is pleased to direct my waywardness and bring my wandering spirit back. If after a thousand slips He still restores my soul and establishes my goings, I dare not praise myself for it--I must gratefully put the crown of my perseverance in righteousness upon the head of that Infinite Grace which has worked all my works in me.

Beloved, if you will, at your leisure, survey all the steps of the work of Grace, you will be persuaded that you could not say of one more than another, "This is of Divine Grace," but you would have to confess it equally of all. There is no point in the Christian's life where his own merit avails him, no period where his own strength comes to the rescue of Divine power. It must be Grace that makes the dead soul live--and it is equally Grace which keeps the living soul alive. It must be Grace that washes the sin-blackened soul and makes it white as snow. And it must be equally Grace which keeps that soul from going back to its former filthiness. From foundation to pinnacle the temple of our salvation is all of Grace.

Certain skeptical philosophers have half conceded that there may have been an exhibition of Divine strength in the beginning, when the great orbs of Heaven were first caused to revolve. But then they affect to question whether any fresh power is put forth to preserve the stars in their courses. You and I know that no forces of the past will suffice for the present demand, and we believe that Divine power is always streaming forth to urge on the wheels of the universe.

It is even so in the little world within us. It was Grace that set our hearts moving towards Christ and holiness. It is equally Grace that keeps us still following after the prize of our high calling in Christ

Jesus. As the waters cover the channels of the sea, so does Grace cover all our salvation. In every jot and every tittle of our heavenly charter, Grace guided the pen. From first to last salvation is free. "For by Grace, are you saved through faith. And that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

III. Now, Brethren, in the third place, having shown that salvation is of Grace as a whole and of Grace in all its details, I shall notice that THE PECULIAR GLORIES OF THIS GRACE OUGHT TO BE POINTED OUT, and to be considered by us.

What are the peculiar glories of Divine Grace? This is not a fashionable doctrine, but we will speak it plainly and honestly. In the first place, it is a peculiar glory of Grace that it is Sovereign, that the favor of God is given to man according to the absolute will of the Almighty God, and for no reason known to us but the good pleasure of His will. When a man gives away anything in kindness to the poor, he likes to exercise his own sovereignty in the gift, but no man is so absolutely a possessor of the good things of this life as to have a right to the exercise of an altogether absolute sovereignty over his goods.

There must be some limit to human rights. A man, even in his free gifts, ought not to give to some, and he ought in preference to give to others. But the great and gracious God has no limits to His absolute will. There are no rights remaining to fallen man before God, except the right to suffer the infliction of justice. Man has so forfeited all claims upon God that on the ground of right he can receive nothing but eternal wrath--nothing whatever. Nor does any claim or pretense of claim in any degree influence the determination of the Most High in the gift of His Grace. Over the heads of

all men He speaks with thundering voice, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Absolute Sovereignty is one of the glories of Divine Grace.

Another glory of this Grace is its entire freeness. Man is not expected to do anything to earn or obtain the Grace of God. He would not if he were expected. He could not if he were required. He has so utterly departed from God that he has lost the favor of God--to lose it was in his power--to gain it again is not. Nor does God bestow His favor on any man because of anything He sees in the man. Neither his wealth, nor his fame, nor his position, nor his character. He looks down on man and passes by kings and princes to let his love settle on the poor.

He looks on men, and often selects the grossest transgressor and the chief of sinners, that these should become eternal monuments of His power to save them. This He does, and continues still to do most freely, spontaneously, because so it seems good in His sight. Another glory of His Grace is its fullness. Where God bestows His Grace, it is no little Grace. It is Grace to cover all the man's sins, whatever they may be. Though they may be so multiplied that he cannot count them, and so gross that he cannot estimate them, yet the Grace of God makes a clean sweep of them all.

"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Blasphemy is expressly mentioned as a violent form of evil and direct attack upon God. The most heinous forms of human iniquity the Grace of God blots out of the Book of Remembrance, and He takes those who committed those heinous sins, changes their nature, makes them His children, and receives them,

at last, into His Glory-- and all because of the free favor which is in His heart towards them.

Another glory of this Grace is its unfailing continuance. Where once the Grace of God has fallen, it is never taken away. If God, in His mercy, visits a man with Grace, He never afterwards revokes the pardon He gives, or recalls the favor He has bestowed. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Grace is no intermittent brook flowing today and dried up tomorrow, no fleeting meteor dazzling all beholders and then vanishing in thick darkness--

"Whom once He loves he ne ver leaves, But loves them to the end." His Grace is unchanging, His mercy endures forever.

Another glory of it is that it is unalloyed and unmingled. God's Grace in saving souls rules alone. Human merit does not intrude here and there to make a patchwork of the whole. Grace triumphant can say, "I have trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." Grace is Alpha. Grace is Omega. It is Grace's glory that no mortal finger touches her work, and no human hammer is lifted up thereon. This is what men cannot bear. They will have it that man must have some merit, must do some little. But it must not be. The Grace of God demands a clear stage. It saves and it, alone, from first to last.

Need I add that it is one glory of this Grace that while it thus reveals itself so fully, it never interferes with any other attribute of God? Interfere, did I say? It only tends to illustrate all the other glories of the Divine Character. God is absolute in His favor, but He is never unjust. He gives justice to all. He allots to each one his portion due. "What?" You say, "is He just to those whom He favors? Does He not pass by their sins?" I answer, "Yes," but I also say, "No." He does pass by their sins so far as they are concerned, but He does so justly. For He first laid their sins upon their Surety, and exacted

from Christ the vengeance due for their transgressions.

He is as just towards His saints as if He had no mercy upon them, for in their Substitute His Justice has received the full payment of His demands. There is no attribute of God that Grace ever slights. It is on the best terms with God's Truth, though Truth said, "I will by no means spare the guilty." God has not spared the guilty, for He laid the guilt on Christ and did not spare Him. And now His people are not guilty--they are absolved, there is no condemnation to them, their transgression is forgiven--their sin is covered.

I say, again, this is the glory of Grace--one of its special crowns and adornments--that though it has its way and works as freely as if Justice were dead, and holiness were withered, yet it never does invade the realm of any one of those bright attributes. God is as just, and as holy as if He were not gracious, and yet His Infinite Sovereignty sways its undisputed scepter in the realm of salvation.

IV. I have brought you thus far, into the very heart of the text, and now, in the fourth place, THIS GRACE OUGHT TO BE THE SUBJECT OF PRAISE. It is "to the praise of the glory of His Grace." Here needs a tongue far more fluent than mine. Or rather, here is wanted no tongue but a warm heart and grateful thought to sit down and contemplate.

As many of you as have been bought with blood and washed in it. As many of you as have been taken from among men and made to be the Lord's own peculiar people, I ask you now, in silence, to praise God while your mind surveys the whole plan of your salvation. Chosen before the earth was--Grace, free Grace! Given into the hands of Christ to be His treasure--all of Grace! Redeemed with the heart's blood of Immanuel, all out of His free favor to you!

Preserved when you were running into sin, slaves of Satan, mad on your idols--preserved in Christ Jesus by long-suffering Grace! Called with

that voice which wakes the dead, and endowed with spiritual life--altogether of Grace! Adopted into the Divine family, made partakers of the Divine Nature because Grace so willed it--what wonders are here! Brothers and Sisters, in your case it was Grace of the most eminent degree. If you do not say so of your case, I must say so of mine.

Above all the sons of men I humbly claim to be most indebted to the Grace of God. But I doubt not, my Brothers and Sisters, you also claim the same. There were specialties about our character, there were peculiarities about our sin, there were difficulties about our constitution which all tended to make it very remarkable that we should be the subjects of the Divine Love. Each one of us can say, "What was there in me that could merit esteem, or give the Creator delight?" Now, you will glorify God if you let your soul in silence muse at the foot of the Throne of Grace, and worship Him of whose mercy you have so largely been made a recipient.

When you have done this, may I ask you, in the next place, to let all men see the result of Grace in you! It has been a common slander against the Doctrine of Grace that it makes light of good works, and leads men to licentiousness--a slander which the lives of the people of God have amply answered in the past. Now you to whom this mercy has been shown--by your watchfulness, your hatred of the very appearance of evil, your careful walking, your close fellowship with Christ--prove to those who ridicule us, by your lives, that Grace is a holy thing wherever bestowed, for it renews the heart and sanctifies the life.

You are degrading the Grace of God when you are not walking as becomes the household of faith. You are honoring God better by holiness than by writing the sweetest poetry, or by uttering the most seraphic sentences upon it. Holy living is "to the praise of the glory of His Grace." Add

to your holy living your own personal testimony. I do not care to hear people who are converted talking much about what they were before conversion. I am not sure that the records of horrid lives of base men are ever profitable if they are written. Perhaps the best thing to say is, "Of which things we are now ashamed."

But at the same time tell it to others that the Grace of God has saved you. If you were, before conversion, given to great sins, be ashamed of them, but do tell that Grace has saved such as you are. Be bold to testify in all companies that the Grace of God is equal to all emergencies and can save the lost from going quite down into the jaws of perdition. Publish it everywhere that the mercy of God can blot out the grossest and vilest sins--that no man need despair--that the great heart of God is large enough to receive the most devilish of sinners. Proclaim that he passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin for Jesus Christ's sake. Let the angels know it! When you are introduced to Heaven, publish there what God's Grace has done--and till you get there let men know it here below--to the praise of the glory of His Grace."

V. And now, lastly, let me say that the doctrine which we have taught this morning, THE TRUTH WHICH WE HAVE TRIED FULLY TO PREACH, IS THE GREAT GROUND OF HOPE FOR SINNERS. For, in the first place, if it is so that salvation is all of the free favor of God, then here is hope for every man!

You will enquire "How?" I will reply thus. Suppose there is here a man who has been guilty of some gross crime, yet others who have been guilty of the like crime have been pardoned, and have been the subjects of Divine Grace--why should he not be? If salvation were by merit, such a man clearly would be shut out of hope, and rightly considered, every man would be. We have, none of us, a half-a-grain of merit if we were

ransacked through and through. But if it is of Grace, why should not the Grace of God stick on me as well as on any other man?

And if it is proved that the Grace of God is so Sovereign that it has often fallen on the very worst of men, why not on me, if I am the very worst of men? And if I find it written that him that comes to Christ He will in nowise cast out, then I,

even if I am the worst of men, am encouraged to come to Christ. He has saved others--the worst of men. He tells me if I come, if anyone comes, He will not cast him out. Then why should not I go? Why not, indeed? If there were anything like preparation, or readiness, or merit, or adaptation, then there would be no hope for me. But if it is a matter altogether of a pure, gratuitous gift--then why should it not be given to me as well as to another? It holds out a bright encouragement to every sinner, and it holds out hope even to the exceedingly gross transgressor because Grace is evidently magnified in changing the nature of great sinners. If I am a great transgressor and have desperately sinned, what room there will be for Grace to glorify itself in me! Here is hope for me. Why should I not go to God in prayer and ask to be made a trophy of His Grace?

And if any should say, "But if we are not the grossest of sinners, then we seem to be shut out!" I answer, No, but rather to be included, because if any will say, "God saves the greatest of sinners, because they glorify His Grace most," I should reply, God is not actuated by any selfish motive. He does not save men that He may get anything by it, and you from whom He can derive nothing are the very people He is likely to save, to prove the utter freeness and disinterestedness of His love.

Do not, for a moment, imagine we are going to put sin in the place of merit, and make it appear that the greatness of their sin is the reason

why the Lord will save men! If there is no reason for Grace in human merit, much less is there in the degree of demerit. If you have never gone into gross sin, thank God for it, but for all that, you are sinner enough. If you see yourself as you are, you are filthy enough in all conscience--you need not be any viler. And because your case does not, to you, appear as though you could glorify God, it is not, therefore, to be argued that it appears so to Him who sees not as man sees. When a surgeon meets with a case which apparently will bring no credit to him in vulgar eyes if he cures it, it is the highest honor to him that he was not deterred by the fear that it would bring him no honor. It is highly glorious to God that He is not affected by the praise of men. There is hope, then, for you who cannot be numbered with the grossest of transgressors. If all is of Grace then it neither shuts out big nor little. And while the gracious promises ring like a peal of silver bells, "Come unto Me all you that labor," and that with a general and universal note to every sinner under Heaven, "Whosoever believes in Him is not condemned," "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved," and such like passages, why, we are greatly encouraged to come to Jesus!

This doctrine that salvation is all of Grace, and not of us at all, is one of the very best reasons why I, though I do not feel right, nor act right, nor am right, but am just a lump of sin, a mass of filthiness, and nothing else--should come as I am, even now, and put my trust in the blood and righteousness of Christ! And I, even I, can trust that I shall find acceptance in the Beloved. O that some hearts, today, may, by the Holy Spirit, be encouraged to come to Christ!

If you have any goodness, this sermon is a death knell for you. If you have any merits, away with you, away with you! Christ came not to call

the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. If you are not sick, what are you doing here? The physician is come to heal the sick, not those who are in health. But if you have nothing that could deserve anything of God, then to you is the word of this salvation sent, "To the praise of the glory of His Grace."

My last word shall briefly indicate what is the privilege of each sinner who would rejoice in the Sovereign Grace of God. Often as we explain faith, we still need to explain it again. I met with an illustration taken from the American war. One had been trying to instruct a dying officer in what faith was. At last he caught the idea, and he said, "I could not understand it before, but I see it now. It is just this--I surrender, I surrender to Jesus."

That is it! You have been fighting against God, standing out against Him, trying to make terms more or less favorable to yourself. Now here you stand in the Presence of God, and you drop the sword of your rebellion and say, "Lord, I surrender, I am Your prisoner. I trust to Your mercy to save me. I have done with self, I fall into Your arms."--

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

May God bless you. Amen.

Chapter 51

Right Replies To Right Requests

(No. 959)

DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If a son shall ask for bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Luke 11:11-13.

IN this chapter there is an evident progress. It opens by the disciples asking the Lord to teach them to pray. To that He gave a full and sufficient reply. He prepared them an outline of what complete prayer should be. Brethren, we have need, some of us, to begin with asking to be taught to pray. It will be a blessed sign when it can be said of us, "Behold, he prays." And just in proportion as we are instructed how to pray shall we give evidence of a more advanced Christian life. He has most grown in Grace who prays best. Depend upon it, the most acceptable prayer with God is the evidence of a most accepted state of heart within.

Our growth in prayer may be to us the test of our growth in all other respects. "Lord, teach us to pray," is a prayer for the young beginner and for the more advanced disciple. It is a suitable petition for as all, for we have none of us yet learned to the full the sacred art of supplication. Then the chapter proceeds a little further to answer a question--we are shown how to pray, but will God really answer us? Is

prayer only meant to do good to the suppliant? Does it end with the benefit which it works in us, or does it really affect the heart of God? Do replies actually come from Heaven in answer to the entreaties of God's children?

The answer is given by our Lord with great clearness. We have a parable to show that as importunity does evidently affect men, so importunity will also gain an answer from God--that He will be pleased to give us what we need if we do but know how, with incessant earnestness, to come again and again to Him in prayer. We are assured that asking is attended with receiving, that seeking is attended with finding, that knocking will lead to opening. That it is not a vain thing to pray, that our prayers are not lost on the wind, or expended merely on ourselves--but that there is a connection established by Divine decree between the prayer that is raised on earth and the mercy that is given forth from Heaven.

But since we are such sinful creatures, the chapter proceeds to deal with a grave doubt which may arise in the troubled mind. "It may be God will hear, and as a general rule will make replies in mercy. But I am an undeserving one. If the Lord should be incensed at my prayers and answer me in wrath instead of love, I should deserve it. If after having made my confession, He should deal with me, judging me out of my own mouth, and then and there condemn me, what should I say?"

The Savior very explicitly answers the question as to whether God will give answers of peace, and will always grant us good things. And He puts it thus to us--when your children ask for good things you grant their requests. You do not mock them by giving them something that may look like what they asked for, but is only a deception. You never play upon their ignorance and mock their childish confidence by giving them

the injurious semblance of what would have been a useful reality. When their prayers are right, you answer them.

If you, then, being evil, fallen creatures, yet answer your children's right and proper prayers, how much more will your heavenly Father answer your fitting prayers, and give to you good things? He will not put you off with evil things when you ask for good, but He will grant you in Truth the good gifts which you are seeking after.

You will observe that the fear, lest God should give us something evil when we are seeking something good, is very naturally raised in the heart by a sense of sinfulness. And is increased by the conviction that we should not always be able to judge whether the thing received is good or not good. We tremble lest we should receive from the Divine hands what appears to be gracious, and yet may be sent in judgment. But he says, "No, your children trust in their father, and their father never deceives them--you may safely trust your heavenly Father that when you ask a good thing from Him, He will most assuredly give you a good thing, and not an evil thing in lieu of it."

You are true and kind to your children--much more shall God be good towards you. In saying, "How much more?" we ask an unanswerable question. As high as God is above us, so high is the certainty that He will give us good above the certainty that we will give good things to our children. Yet since we feel in our hearts quite certain that we could not mock our children, let us be quite convinced that it is still further beyond all question that God will ever mock us and give to us an evil thing when we are seeking a good thing at His hands.

By the way, it has been remarked that the expression of our Savior here is, "you being evil." That expression evidently teaching the doctrine of our fallen condition, the doctrine of human depravity. You, My disciples, you are evil. You who have children, whether you are upright

or otherwise in others' estimation, you are all evil, and yet, being evil, you still have such affection and judgment that you give your children good gifts. Much more shall He who is infinitely good give good things to you when you seek them.

I have met with many expositions of this passage in which there is an attempt made to show that the child asked a wrong thing, and wished for a stone which appeared to be bread. Nothing of the kind is here. The child is not represented as asking for a stone, but as seeking, as he should, a most proper gift, namely, bread. No mistake was made at all by the child--his prayer was what it should be. The point of the parable touches the father's answer. The Truth here taught is not that God will refuse us evil things if in our mistake we ask for them. That is a Truth, but it is not alluded to here. The one statement of this verse is that prayers for good things will be answered--and that they will not be answered with gifts wearing the mere appearance of good--but with the actual good things desired. That simple thought I shall endeavor to enlarge upon in this morning's discourse.

Our first head will be--right prayers, right answers. The second point will be the best prayer, the surest answer. And the last head will be this--the prayer of the text is the best, for it contains all blessings in it.

1. First, then, RIGHT PRAYERS, RIGHT ANSWERS. The child asks for bread, his father does not give him a stone. He asks for a fish--there are certain kinds of fish that are very like snakes--but the father does not give him a serpent. The child asks for an egg--we are told by some that certain scorpions, when they fold themselves up, look like eggs--the father never makes a fool of the child, or injures him by giving him a scorpion for an egg.

If we may be allowed to put some interpretation upon this, I should say

if we begin our prayers by asking God for necessities, that is bread, bread temporal, or the Bread of Life, He will not give us useless, tooth-breaking, unsatisfying stones. We shall have, when we pray for necessary things, the really necessary things themselves, not the imitation of them, but the actual blessings. And if our faith grows a little stronger, and having obtained bread, we may ask for fish-- not absolutely a necessity--but a comfort and a relish. If we make bold to ask for spiritual comforts, consoling gifts and ennobling Graces, something over and above what is absolutely necessary to save us, our heavenly Father will not mock us by giving us superficial comforts which might be injurious as a serpent.

He will give us so much of comfort as we can bear. And it shall be pure, holy, healthy comfort. And if, gathering more confidence still, we ask for an egg, which I take it was in Christ's day a rarer luxury, we shall not be deluded by its counterfeit. Only once, except in this place, and that in the book of Job, and Job was a rich man, do we ever read of eating eggs at all in Scripture. And all through the Bible we find not even the mention of poultry till our Savior's day. And then chickens were so valuable that eggs were considered a high luxury, for which a child, at least, might not be expected to make a request.

But if the child is bold enough at last to ask for this larger favor, his father will not punish his impertinence by putting into his hand a deadly scorpion. Even thus, if I can summon faith enough to ask for the highest enjoyments and enrichments of Divine Grace, the highest blessings of Christian manhood, the most rapt and intense fellowship with Christ, I shall not receive, instead of that an intoxicating excitement, a delirious fanaticism, or some other deadly or injurious thing.

Now, this at first sight may not seem to be a very useful Truth of God,

but I think I can show you that it is. To begin with, the common blessings of Providence. You have been laying your case before the Throne with much earnestness of late, and you have prayed God to guide and lead you in all the steps of life. At this moment you are overwhelmed with trouble--distress has followed distress. Now, do not judge God harshly, above all do not judge Him so harshly as to think Him less kind and tender than you would be yourself. Your child asking for bread receives bread. You have asked guidance and shall have it. You have asked Providential care and you have obtained it. These present circumstances, which God has appointed for you are what you have asked for.

Your present lot is from the Lord. He has not given you a stone. It seems hard, perhaps. May it not be the crust of true bread for all that? Believe it to be so, but never suspect that you are treated ungenerously by your Lord. Were you as able to judge as He is, you would perceive that He has given you that which is for your lasting good, and has appointed the best thing possible for you. Do not look upon your present distress as a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion. If so you will be afraid of your mercies and tremble at your consolations. Providential love you have sought, and Providential love is yours beyond all question, even though trials surround you.

For by all these things men live, and in all these is the life of our spirit. God will bring good out of the apparent evil. Indeed, if Faith will but open her eyes, it is not apparent evil, but it is even now evidently good. Blind Unbelief misrepresents the work of God. Faith's clearer eye discerns the Truth. Do not suspect your God of giving you the scorpion instead of the egg. You have asked that here on earth Providence may deal wisely with you, and that God may be glorified by you. Infinite Wisdom is even now fulfilling your hallowed wish. Amid

fiery trials your faith is honoring God, and every circumstance of your affliction is made subservient to your soul's perfection.

In spiritual matters how often in our earnest anxiety to be right have we questioned whether the spiritual gifts which we have received are what we hope they are, or whether after having sought of God Divine Grace, we may not, after all have missed it. For instance, many of us, I hope most of us, are possessors this day of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We look to His Cross and we are lightened. We see Him as our suffering Substitute, and our soul feels joy and peace as the result of faith. Our faith does lay her hand upon His head as the scapegoat, and we see sin carried away by Him into the wilderness of forgetfulness. But the question will come and sometimes very bitterly, "Is this true faith? Is this the faith of God's elect? Is it not, after all, presumption for me to say and believe that in Jesus Christ I am pardoned and saved? There is, evidently, a notional faith, may not mine be that? There is, it seems, a faith of devils, for they 'believe and tremble.' May not mine be of that sort? Is this which I have sought of God in prayer, and which I accepted as my answer, the real Grace of faith, or am I, after all, deluding myself?" Look, my Brother, where did you seek this faith? Did you not ask your heavenly Father to give it to you? Have you not devoutly sought, and do you not still seek today, even with tears, that He would work in you the faith which is of His own Spirit's creation?

Now do you think that He would have given you a stone instead of bread, that He would have put into your heart a carnal presumption, or have suffered it to come there while you were waiting for the humble, simple faith of God's own people? My Lord, I sought it at Your feet, and there I found it! And it cannot be otherwise than a good and real faith which I found when I looked up to You. Be assured, O anxious Heart, that in

the vital matter of faith true seekers shall not be put off with false faith. The same question may arise as to every spiritual Grace. We will take repentance. I am not for a moment about to depreciate the value of a discriminating theology, which clearly shows the difference between legal bondage, and the evangelical repentance of a child of God.

But I suppose few of us can sit under sermons of that order, especially if the preachers make a great many nice distinctions, without feeling, "I am afraid I come short on several points. I fear that my repentance does not come up to the mark, and I hardly know whether I can quite say that I have so renounced sin, so abhorred it, so detested it, so loathed it from the very bottom of my soul, as this good man describes." Well, then, it will be a sweet thing to fall back upon this--I seek repentance of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. I come to my Father and I say, "Create in me a new heart, O God. If my heart is not broken and contrite, break it. And heal it if it is."

I earnestly desire that the Lord would give me a tender spirit. My longing is towards the repentance which is of His own working. I lay myself down like a field, and ask Him to plow me. I put myself before Him as the patient places his limb under the surgeon's knife--and I beseech Him to deal with me in the most cutting and severe manner, so that He may but rid me of the disease of sin. Now, if you sincerely act thus, I am sure you will not be deceived in your repentance. You shall receive the repentance that needs not to be repented of. You would not give your child the serpent instead of the fish--neither will God suffer you to be deluded with a suppositious repentance instead of the Gospel repentance which is the peculiar watermark of His own chosen.

Now, as I have said, all our Divine Graces may be subjected to the same questioning, and our confidence in them may be reestablished by the same method. If you have sought them of the Lord, and have waited upon

Him in prayer anxiously desiring to have such as He gives--and only such as He gives--you shall not be deceived or disappointed. He of whom you seek these gifts is Truth itself and gives no mockeries to His sons. If you went to pretended mediators and priests, you would be deceived, but never by the one Mediator, Jesus Christ.

If you dream that the spiritual benefit is to pass through mortal hands--there are priests nowadays, like the priests of Egypt, Jannes and Jambres--who during the passage of the fish through their hands would have transformed it into a serpent, and craftily exchanged the egg for a scorpion by a little manipulation. If, then, I have got my religion at second hand I may have been deceived. But if I have gone to God Himself, my Father, in earnest and importunate prayer, and have desired to receive these blessings direct from His Son and His Spirit, no mistake can have occurred. I must have received the good thing which I sought.

We will take one more instance, and that shall comprehend the whole. My dear Brothers and Sisters, in looking back upon all our experience, the doubt will occur to us whether, after all, it may not have been a fallacy and a delusion. I thought that I was brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. I thought that I rejoiced in the Lord. I have thought that my prayers have been answered. I have believed that I have been led from Grace to Grace by His Spirit. I have thought, and if not awfully deceived it is true, that I have had fellowship with the Father and with His Son. I have had but few ecstasies, but I have had much peace. I have had both the mournful and the cheerful experiences of God's people--I think I have.

But in dark times we say, "Is it so? Am I, after all, a true child of God? May I not, after all, have persuaded myself that I was converted during a revival or under a certain earnest minister? May I not, since

then, have propped up that deceptive supposition by the respect and esteem of Christian people, and may I not, up till now, have been a deceiver, or self-deceived? May not the whole thing turn out to be one awful sham?" In such a case we come back to this--where did I seek this, and what did I seek? Did I go to God and desire to be a mere professor? Was it my wish to gain a worldly position, or to win the respect of my friends by professing to be a Christian?

Or did I go sincerely to the Lord, and for love of salvation desire to be converted? Did I desire the Savior that I might be reconciled to God, that I might be made holy? And since then have I still desired truly and earnestly to possess the Grace which God gives, and not the mere imitations of man? Do I pant to have God's own Spirit in my soul, and is that my sincere and earnest prayer now?

Well, then, I have no right to suspect that I am deceived. Like a child, I believe that my heavenly Father has given me what I asked for. I have done right in so believing. My child would do me a gross injustice if he suspected that the fish I gave him was not a fish, but a serpent. And I do my God a great injustice if, sincerely knowing that I have sought the one thing necessary at His hands through Jesus Christ, I suspected that He has permitted me to be deluded with something else. No, if I sought it from Him, and sought it sincerely, I have now the good thing which I longed for.

Now, this simple Truth may yet be very, very helpful to you--for nowadays men assail our faith. Some of us have waited upon the Lord for teaching, and we have been established in the old faith which men now sneer and rail at as a worn-out creed. We have been taught as we believe, by the Spirit of God, and by God's Word. And now, because this advanced age and this enlightened century have discovered that these old-fashioned truths are not philosophical, are we to believe that when

we went to God for teaching we did not receive bread, but a stone? I do not believe it, nor will I give up the bread I have long lived on because these men choose to call it a stone. I will hold it still, it is my food, and on it I shall live forever. If a man has sought of God to be filled with zeal till he becomes like a burning seraph, some will tell him this is all wildfire--the man is excited beyond bounds--he ought to be more reserved. My dear Brother, if you have sought from God the zeal of His House that eats you up, do not believe that the spirit that God has given you is wildfire. Do not believe that your ardor for the conversion of sinners is fanaticism. Hold on to it and get more of it, and do not let the devil delude you out of the treasure you have gained.

The fish is a fish, not a serpent, and the egg is an egg, and not a scorpion. And so, too, when the Believer has stood fast in the faith and would not leave it, then he has been told, "It is only your natural obstinacy. You are pig-headed. You have got hold of a thing and there is no making you give it up." Many a man of God has been ridiculed for his de-termination--"it is not that be has any real martyr's spirit in him, it is only his animal obstinacy." Ah, my Friend, but you know where you got this firmness! And if you wait upon the Lord, and say, "Establish me in Your fear, my God. Help me to bear contradiction of sinners against myself, as my Redeemer did," then God will not give you any evil thing. Having done all, still stand, endure to the end, and you shall gain the Crown of Life that fades not away. That is our first point--prayer for good things meets a good answer.

II. Then, dear Friends, the question will arise in every heart--"It seems, then, that I have only to ascertain that my prayer is for a really good thing, and I shall have it." Just so, and therefore, secondly, THE PRAYER FOR THE BEST

THING IS SUREST OF AN ANSWER, for, says the text, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy
Spirit to them that ask Him?" There is no doubt about the Holy Spirit being a good thing. When we, therefore, ask for Him, for His Divine Presence and influence, we may rest assured that God will give it. Make that our first point under this head--God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for Him.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit sometimes is represented as the wind, the life-giving breath. He blows upon the valleys thickly strewn with slain, and they are quickened to life. You and I, though we are made to live, often feel that life to be flagging, and almost dying. The Spirit of God can quicken us, revive in us the spark of Divine life, and strengthen in our hearts the life of God. Pray for this quickening breath, and, my Brothers and Sisters, God will give it to you. As surely as you sincerely pray, you shall have and feel the revival of the life within.

The Spirit of God is sometimes compared to water. It is He who applies the blood of Jesus and sanctifies us. He cleanses us, fertilizes us. Well, He will come to us in that capacity. Do we feel that our sin has much power over us? O Spirit of God, destroy sin within us and work in us purity! You have already given us the new birth by water and the Spirit, go on and complete Your work till our whole nature shall be fashioned in the image of the Great First-born. You shall have it if you seek it--God will give you this Spirit if this you seek for.

The Holy Spirit is revealed to us under the image of light. He illuminates the mind, He makes our natural darkness flee. Wait upon Him, O child of God, that you may be led into all Truth. He can make that which now perplexes you to become plain. He can uplift you into Truths of God which are now too high for your attainment. Wait upon

Him! As a child of God, long to be taught of God. I do not know how to express to you the sense I feel just now of the deep condescension of God in promising to give us the Holy Spirit. He has given us His Son, and now He promises his Spirit!

Here are two gifts, unspeakable in preciousness! Will God, in very deed dwell with man upon the earth? Will God dwell in man? Can it be that the infinite Spirit, God over all, blessed forever, will dwell in my poor heart, and make my body to be His temple? It is certainly so. For as sure as it is that God will give good things to those that ask for good things, He will surest of all give the Holy Spirit to them that ask for the Holy Spirit. Sit not in the dark, then, when the light of God will break upon you if you seek it!

The Holy Spirit is set forth to us under the emblem of fire, and in this capacity He kindles enthusiasm of spirit, and burning zeal in the hearts of God's people. The tongue of fire speaks with a matchless might. The heart of flame conquers the sons of men. O that we had this fire! It is to be had. The Spirit of God will come in answer to our cries. He will come and fire the Church, and each individual member of it. Oftentimes the Spirit of God is set forth as oil. By Him we have the Divine anointing. The prayer that the pastor may be anointed with fresh oil is a very welcome one, but it is equally needed that you, yourselves, have your lamps supplied that your light may not go out. This desire will be fulfilled. He will give the Holy Spirit in this way to them that ask Him for it.

And so, too, as the gentle dropping dew that cheers and refreshes the grass, so will the Spirit come to console our spirits, care-worn, tried with the heat of this world's busy day. The Holy Spirit will come and bedew us if we seek Him. As the blessed Dove, bearing peace upon His wings, He will come to us. In fact, there is no operation of the Spirit

which will not be brought in us if we seek it. There is no attribute of the Spirit of God which shall not be put forth for us if we ask it. He will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

From the connection in which the text stands, I gather the following remark, namely, that it will truly be the Holy Spirit. Go back again to that first thought. The child asks for bread, and does not get a stone. You ask for the Holy Spirit, and you shall receive the Holy Spirit.

Some persons have been misled by an evil spirit. I believe that very much of the rant that came out years ago about the date of the second coming of Christ, the unknown tongues, and I do not know what beside of blatant nonsense, was of an evil spirit. And I query whether there was a humble laying down of minds be-

fore God's Throne to seek the Holy Spirit. Whether there was not much self-sufficiency, and much desire for something that would make important its possessor which led certain eminent preachers into vain imaginings and fanatical rant.

You shall not receive an evil spirit instead of the good Spirit, if you humbly and patiently wait upon the Most High. Neither shall you be misled by fancy. Men will tell you that you are deluded when you experience high joys and deep experiences. But if you have sought the Spirit sincerely and intensely, it shall be the Spirit that God will give you. You need not be afraid when you bow before Jehovah's Throne in Jesus' name and ask for the Holy Spirit, that you will be sent away with anything short of that Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son.

But it appears plainly enough from the text that this Holy Spirit is to be given in answer to prayer. Did not we hear some time ago from certain wise Brethren that we were never to pray for the Spirit? I think I heard it said often, "We have the Holy Spirit, and therefore we

are not to pray for Him." Like that other certain declaration of the same brotherhood, that we have pardon of sin, and are not to pray for it, just as if we were never to pray for what we have! If we have life we are to pray that we have it more abundantly. If we have pardon in one respect we are to ask for a fuller sense of it. And if we have the Holy Spirit so that we are quickened, and saved, we do not ask for Him in that capacity, but we ask for His power in other directions, and for His Grace in other forms.

I do not go before God now and say, "Lord, I am a dead sinner, quicken me by Your Spirit," for I trust I am quickened of His Spirit. But being quickened, I now cry, "Lord, let not the life You have given me ebb down till it becomes very feeble, but give me of Your Spirit that the life within me may become strong and mighty, and may subdue all the power of death within my members, that I may put forth the vigor and energy which come from Yourself through the
Spirit."

you that have the Spirit, you are the very men and women to pray that you may experience more of His matchless operations and gracious influences. And in all the benign sanctity of His indwelling may you seek that yet more and more you may know Him. You have this as your encouragement--that God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Ever since certain Brethren gave up asking for the Holy Spirit they have not had it, and they have gone aside into many inventions. If they will not ask, they shall not have, but be it yours and mine to wait humbly and patiently upon the Lord that He may daily give us of His Spirit.

1 desire earnestly to call your attention to one thing which our Savior says--"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children," how ought it to run to make it parallel?--"How much more

shall your heavenly Father know how to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Would not that be the parallel? Of course it would, but He does not say so. He very kindly puts it, in the first place, that we, "know how to give good gifts," for sometimes we know how to give them, but we cannot do it. It is a bitter thing, and yet it has sometimes happened that the child has said, "Father, give me bread," and with a breaking heart the father has had to reply, "My child, there is none."

It must be one of the hardest trials of human life, and yet it is the trial of tens of thousands in this city at this time, to have to say, "No, there is not even a crust of bread for my child." You see the father knows how, but he cannot do it. But the text does not say that God knows how to give the Holy Spirit, it says a great deal more than that. It declares that He does give, because with Him to know how is the same thing as to do it. He gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. He does not only know how, but He does it. Never does He have to say to His child, "My child, I cannot." The poor sinner says, "Lord, help me to repent," and the Lord never says, "I have not enough of the Holy Spirit to make you repent."

When one of His children cries, "Lord, give me the anointing of the Holy One that I may understand Your Gospel more fully," the heavenly Father never answers, "I cannot give you so much of the Holy Spirit as that." Boundlessly will He give if Faith dares but open her mouth wide. You are not straitened in Him. You are straitened in yourselves.

Brothers and Sisters, I am telling you nothing new, but a very simple Truth. And yet, for all that, a Truth which we do not put in practice.

We may have the Spirit of God resting upon us. As Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit, even so may we. No miracles do we seek, but all the spiritual uplifting which the Holy Spirit gave to men of

old we need, and He can give it to us still.

Though He will not reveal new Truths--we do not want Him to, for we have already the complete Gospel re-vealed--He will bring home the old Truths to our souls and make them potent upon our consciences--and upon our lives--this is what we want! Oh, if any of you are but just Christians, and are not glorifying God, nor living near Him, nor mighty in prayer, nor well taught in Scripture, nor useful in your lives--I beseech you remember--if you have not the Spirit it is because you do not seek Him importunately!

You do not seek Him with a deep sense of your need of Him. If you, being evil, give your children bread, how much more will God give you the Spirit? And as you, being evil, do not mock your child by putting him off without the bread, and giving him something else, neither will your heavenly Father. He will give you the real Spirit--not enthusiasm that might mislead you! Not fanaticism that might injure you! Not self-conceit that might become like a deadly scorpion to you--but He promises to give His own gentle, truthful, infallible Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.

III. Now for our last point. THE BEST OF PRAYERS, WHICH IS SURE TO BE HEARD, IS ALSO A MOST COMPREHENSIVE ONE. Turn to the parallel passage in the Gospel of Matthew (7:11). Note that Matthew says nothing about the egg. And then read the eleventh verse, "If you being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

Now what does our text say, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Is it not clear then that the Holy Spirit is the equivalent for "good things," and that, in fact, when the Lord gives us the Holy Spirit He gives us all "good things"?

What a comprehensive prayer, then, is the prayer for the Spirit of God! Dear Brothers and Sisters, sit down with pencil in hand and a sheet of blank paper before you, and write down all your spiritual wants. I will judge of your wisdom by the length of the list--for if you know yourself you will find you have not done yet--you are a great mass of wants. To pray for all these things separately might seem a very long exercise. My dear Brethren, just take the pencil, and do as the school boys do when they add up the total of their sums. You will find it all adds to this--the Holy Spirit.

"My God, give me Your Holy Spirit, and I have all." "But do we not need the Savior?" says one. Truly, but the Holy Spirit, when He comes, "takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us." That is the great value of the Holy Spirit. "He shall glorify Me." Wherever the Spirit of God comes there comes the blood of the Atonement, we are brought near by it, and every spiritual blessing bought with blood is brought by the Holy Spirit home to the soul. If you have the Spirit He does not come empty-handed. He comes loaded with all the treasures of the Everlasting Covenant--the blessings ordained for you from before the foundation of the world. And He brings the blessings secured to you in the Covenant of Grace, and the blessings bought for you by Jesus' precious blood. Do, then, let this be your prayer; "Give me, O God, Your Holy Spirit."

Then, my dear Friends, your prayer is intercessory as well as for yourselves. You pray for your children, for your wife, for your neighbors, for your friends. I hope your intercessory roll is a long one. If God gives you power to bless men by your prayers, do not stay the blessing. What is it that you want for others? In one word, it is the Holy Spirit! Let the Holy Spirit be given to that dear boy of yours, and he will have a tender conscience--you have often wished he

had. He will have a desire after Christ, and he will find Christ. He will be a Christian. Let the Holy Spirit be given to that girl of yours. She will have a desire for the Word of God, a love for the means of Grace. She will find the Savior, she will become a useful Christian woman.

Your neighbors, you prayed that they might go with you to hear the Gospel, and a very excellent prayer it was. Still it would be a fuller prayer, still, that the Spirit would visit them. Some have been visited by the Holy Spirit who have not been in the House of God. Even at their work, Divine impulses they could not account for, have followed them. The fact is, the hearing of the Word is but the vehicle, the power lies in the Spirit of God. I put it to you, therefore, whether it is not a most fitting prayer for you to offer for your neighbors and kinsfolk.

And, now, the last point is one I wish to impress upon your hearts, my dear Friends. Tomorrow is the Day of Prayer. As I have said, I hope you may be all, with one accord, in one place in prayer. But I humbly suggest to you that we should all pray throughout that day and onward, that God will give to His Churches more and more of the Holy Spirit.

Just now, I do not know how you feel, but I am ill at ease. The Church of England is eaten through and through with Sacra-mentarianism, but Nonconformity appears to me to be almost as badly riddled with philosophical infidelity. Those of whom we thought better things are turning aside one by one from the fundamentals of the faith.

At first they gave up the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment, now it must be the doctrine of the Fall--first one thing then another. If some men have their way all the doctrines of the Word must go. They treat the doctrines of Scripture as though they were all disproved, and only held by a few ignorant bigots. Through and through, I believe, the

heart of England is honeycombed with a detestable infidelity which dares, still, to go into the pulpit, and call itself Christian. I pray that God may preserve our denomination from it.

But my prayer shall go up that He will give us the Holy Spirit--for men never go wrong with the Holy Spirit--He will keep them right, and lead them into all Truth. Soundness of doctrine is only worth having when it is the result of the living indwelling of God in the Church. And because too much of the Holy Spirit has departed, we see the signs that the orthodox faith is given up, and the inventions of man preached instead.

Sometimes I breathe, as I walk along, this prayer, that God would raise up more ministers to preach the Gospel with power. There is so much feeble preaching, mere twaddling, and so little declaration of the Gospel with power. But I do not know that I will pray that prayer again. I will put up this, "Lord, send Your Spirit upon the Churches!" Then will come the ministers! Then will come the earnest workers. The Spirit of God will touch their tongues with fire, and they will say, "Here am I, send me." And once again we shall have back the Puritan age of preaching and ministries like those of Whitfield, Edwards, and McCheyne.

The Spirit of God is the power of the Church and speaks with might in her. My longing is that the Churches may be more holy. I grieve to see so much of worldly conformity! How often wealth leads men astray. How many Christians follow the fashions of this wicked world? But shall I pray that the Churches may be holy? I will, but I will put my prayer in this form--I will ask that God will give the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of holiness. He leads to obedience, purges from sin and creates the image of God in His people.

I desire to see, and I think you all do, more unity among the Churches.

It is a pity when Churches fall out, and chide, and fight. Ecclesiastical quarrels are generally more bitter than any other. Do not so much pray for unity as put it all into this, "Lord, give the Holy Spirit. For if the Holy Spirit is in us and abounds, we shall not be divided--the Church of God will feel the unity of life." Life it is that creates true unity among the people of God. If there is anything else that we long to see in the Churches, and I confess there are a thousand things--for I would desire to see them increased with men as with a flock--I would desire to see them built up in an intelligent understanding of the Doctrines of Grace.

I desire to see them looking for the coming of Christ and ready for His advent. If we desire all these, let us ask that the Holy Spirit may be more plenteously given--and when this prayer is answered, as answered it must be--then shall we see all that our soul desires. I do, therefore, very earnestly, over and over again, ask you to make tomorrow a day of real prayer. And if you cannot be here in body, yet all day long cry mightily unto the God of Sabaoth, our Father, who has spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all--who will also with Him freely give us all things, if we know how to ask aright.

Iconoclast

(No. 960)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 13, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He removed the high places, and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it. And he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him." 2 Kings 18:4,5.

THE First Commandment instructs us that there is but one God, who alone is to be worshipped. And the Second Commandment teaches that no attempt is to be made to represent the Lord, neither are we to bow down before any form of sacred similitude. "You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them." The two commandments thus make a full sweep of idolatry. We are not to worship any other god. We are not to worship the true God by the use of representative symbols. He is a Spirit and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and not by the use of visible imagery.

It seems clear that the human mind, since the Fall, finds it hard to keep to this. All over the world men set up images and idols--not at first with the view of worshipping the wood or stone--but with the intention of being helped to worship the Deity by having some outward symbol of his presence. After awhile the evil heart falls into

something even more debasing, and the image itself is adored. Even the people of God, the children of Israel, who so peculiarly enjoyed the Lord's Presence in their midst, and who were taught to worship Him by Lawgivers and Prophets inspired of the Most High could not keep to pure and spiritual worship.

Though their weakness was somewhat helped to the understanding of the Truth of God by a system of types, they were not content with these because they contained no similitude of God. The religion of pious Jews was mainly spiritual, for only at the one appointed spot at Jerusalem was sacrifice allowed, and there the sacred vessels of ceremonial worship were in secret places and seldom, if ever, seen by the people. A worship so little outward was too spiritual for unregener-ate Israel. The people wanted an outward ritual for other places beside Jerusalem. And wherever there was a rock or lofty hill, there they put up an altar to God, and it was called one of the "high places" of the land. Wherever a grove of ancient trees could be discovered, they set that apart, also. To the true God, mark you--but still without Divine sanction, and contrary to His Law, seeing that He had not appointed that there should be any groves or places sacred to Himself except the one chosen spot at Mount Zion. Then they came to the use of teraphim, symbolical forms, statues, "images," as our English translation puts it. Not that they actually worshipped these as God, but used them, as they said, to help them to worship God.

This was all contrary to the Divine Law, and led to a forgetfulness of God Himself, robbing Him of His worship and giving it to dumb idols. As soon as good Hezekiah had come to the throne and taken possession of its power, he set to work to cut down all the groves, to break the images, and as far as he could, as governor of the land, to bring back Israel to her allegiance to the great invisible Jehovah--and to the

spiritual worship in which He delights--restraining the outward worship with sacrifice and offering to the one temple at Jerusalem.

Among the various objects of Israel's degenerate worship was one which it would have seemed natural even for a reformer to spare. It was the famous serpent of brass which had been made by Moses in the wilderness, and had been lifted up upon a pole. By looking to it thousands had been cured of the poisonous bites of fiery serpents. This had been carefully preserved, but seeing that it had become an object of superstitious reverence, Hezekiah destroyed it. According to some, he ground it to powder, and he called it by an opprobrious epithet, Nehushtan. The margin has the translation, "a piece of brass." It might be read, "filth," or "verdigris," or "a piece of copper." The king gave it a name which would show that he protested against the idolatrous reverence shown to it. Although it was an interesting memorial, it must be utterly destroyed because it presented a temptation to idolatry. Here, if ever in this world was a relic of high antiquity, of undoubted authenticity--a relic which had seen its hundreds of years about which there was no question as to its being indisputably the very serpent which Moses made. And it was moreover a relic which had formerly possessed miraculous power--for in the wilderness the looking at it had saved the dying.

Yet it must be broken in pieces, because Israel burned incense to it. Away with it, it is a defiled thing! Call it by an ill name! Dash it to atoms--make Israel to despise it and to forget it. If the bronze serpent is put to a wrong use and made into an idol, it must not be spared. Put the piece of verdigris away. Let the coppery reptile be ground to powder if it is once set up as a rival to Jehovah, or as a sharer in the veneration which is due to Him only.

This leads me to the following remark. After all, our reformers acted

well, and after a Scriptural model when they poured contempt upon the idols of Rome, and made a mockery of her saints, relics, images, masses, and priests. They were more than justified in exposing the idolatries of Popery and subjecting the objects formerly reverenced to the utmost contempt. There was a deep meaning in their breaking of crosses, and the burning of holy crucifixes. The white linen of priestly vestments served well for undergarments for the poor, and altar stones made admirable backs for stoves. But this meant more than utility--it was a protest against superstition.

Holy water vats were in those practical times frequently given to the country people to be turned into troughs for swine. The little altar bells which had formerly been rung at the elevation of the host were hung around horses' necks, and the box which contained the detestable mockery of our incarnate God, which the Papists most adored, was broken in pieces. No contempt could be greater than these idols deserved! The iconoclasts of that age did not go one bit too far. I could wish they had been even less lenient than they were, and that not a single thing ever worshipped by man had been spared for a moment.

Call it God? Then break it up, though art itself perish with it! Adore it as a holy thing? Then away with it, though it is made of gold and inlaid with gems! What God abhors, what His anger smokes against--is not for us to spare from motives of tenderness to other people's feelings, or because the canons of taste would say, "Let the idol be preserved."

Our sires, the Nonconformists, when they left the State-created religion to maintain a spiritual worship and gathered themselves together as the servants of God, did well in bearing their protest against the less glaring idolatries of their age. In their day, as now, there existed the very common idolatry of superstitious reverence of

buildings. Certain piles of stone, brick, and timber are regarded as holy places. It is thought that inside certain walls God is more peculiarly present than outside, where the trees are growing and the birds singing.

Our forefathers protested against this by never calling their buildings Churches. They knew they could not be. They knew that Churches mean companies of faithful men and women. They called the places of their usual worship "meeting houses." That is what they were, and nothing more. The veneration of building materials, pulpits, altars, pews, cushions, tables, candlesticks, organs, cups, plates, etc., is sheer, clear idolatry.

"Worship God" is a command which needs to be spoken in these days in tones of thunder. There is none holy save the Lord. "God that made the world and all things there, seeing that He is Lord of Heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands. Neither is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He gives to all life, and breath, and all things." Hear the Lord's own words--"Heaven is My Throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? says the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Has not My hand made all these things?"

Our sires also stood out against another idolatry which still survives in England--namely, the observing of days and months. Certain days are set apart as holy and observed with great reverence by those calling themselves Christians. Not content with the Sunday as the day appointed of God for His worship, they have, like Israel of old when under legal bondage, new moons, and appointed feasts for which they claim great respect, but to which none whatever is due. Our sires said, "This is not of Scripture, therefore it is of man, therefore it is will-worship, and idolatrous."

And they showed their contempt of the commandments of men by an open disregard of holy days. And we shall do well in this respect and in all others to maintain their pure testimony. Whenever we see superstition in any shape, we must not flatter the folly, but according to our ability act the iconoclast's part and denounce it. In this matter too many do the work of the Lord deceitfully, and bow in the house of Rimmon, instead of maintaining inviolate the spiritual worship of the great I AM.

But let this suffice on such themes, we have other thoughts in our minds. I intend, this morning, first to apportion a share of image-breaking work to Believers. And, secondly, we shall prescribe another form of this same work for seeking souls.

I. We have much IDOL-BREAKING FOR CHRISTIANS TO DO. There is much to be done in the Church of God. But there is much more to be done in our own hearts. First of all, there is much idol-breaking to be done in the Church of God. Let me mention some of the things against which you and I must always bear our personal and earnest protest. We are all too apt as Christians to place some degree of reliance upon men whom God in His infinite mercy raises up to be leaders in the Christian Church.

1. We ought to be thankful for the Paul who plants so well, and the Apollos who waters so ably. We are never to look with contempt or with slighting upon those precious gifts which Christ received when He ascended up on high, and which He continues to give to His Church, namely, Apostles, teachers, preachers, Evangelists, and the like. A man is more precious than a wedge of the gold of Ophir. When God gives a man to the Church fitted for her enlargement, for her establishment, and her confirmation, He gives to her one of the richest blessings of the Covenant of Grace.

But the danger is lest we place the man in the wrong position, and look

to him not only with the respect which is due to him as God's ambassador, but with some degree of--I must call it so--superstitious reliance upon his authority and ability. Brethren, we have discarded saints--we abhor the idea of worshipping them, and yet by slow degrees we may gradually fall into canonization, and virtually set up among ourselves another set of saints. Is it not true that some almost worship St. Calvin, and St. Luther? Beyond their teachings they cannot go.

Over others St. John Wesley, or St. Charles Simeon sway an awe-commanding scepter. And to far more, the minister under whom they sit, and whose teachings they constantly receive, is the reason and basis of their faith. I am afraid that some of the conversions worked in the Christian Church are rather the work of the preacher than of the Spirit of God. And therefore when the minister who was the instrument of them happens to be removed, the faith which was built upon the wisdom or the earnestness of man is removed, too.

The point I want to bring you to is this--receive the Truth of God from us if we give it to you purely, and are truly God's mouth to you--but accept it not because we say it is so. Go to the fountainhead of Truth--search the Scriptures for yourselves--and see whether these things are so. Let nothing be to you a spiritual Truth of God unless it is taught of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures. Do not be content to hear with the outer ear and say, "That is true, for such-and-such a man of God has said it." Ask to hear with the heart so as to feel, "That is true, for God has said it in His Word, and His Holy Spirit has also written it over again in my consciousness and experience."

We must get beyond men, or else we shall be very babes in Divine Grace. If we overvalue the blessings which God gives us in our teachers and preachers, He may remove them from us. We are to exalt not the pipes

but the fountainhead. Not the windows but the sun must we thank for light. Not the basket which holds the food or the lad who brings the loaves and fishes must we reverence, but the Divine Master who blesses and multiplies the bread and feeds the multitude. To Jesus must all adoring eyes be turned, and to the Holy Spirit, the Revealer of the Truth, and to our Father who is in Heaven. And we must receive the Gospel not as the word of man, but as it is in Truth, the Word of God. Love the ministers of Christ, but fall not into that form of bronze serpent worship which will degrade you into the servants of men.

In the Christian Church there is, I am afraid, at this moment, too much exaltation of talent and dependence upon education. I mean especially in reference to ministers. I do not believe that a man of God who is called constantly to preach to the same people can be too thoroughly educated. Neither do I believe that the highest degree of mental culture should be any injury to the Christian minister, but rather should be very helpful to him. By all means let the religious teacher intermeddle with all knowledge, let him give himself unto reading and be able mentally as well as spiritually to take the lead.

But, O Church of God, never set up human learning in the place of the Eternal Spirit, for "it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." The great wonders of Apostolic times were mainly worked by men who were illiterate in the world's judgment. They had been taught of Christ and so had received a noble education. But in classical

studies and in philosophical speculations they were but little versed, with the exception of the Apostle Paul, and he came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom. Yet the Apostles and their followers preached with such power that the world soon felt their presence.

On the slabs of stone which mark the burial places of the early

Christians in the catacombs of Rome, the inscriptions are nearly all ill spelt, many of them have here a letter in Greek and there a letter in Latin. Grammar is forgotten, and orthography is violated--a proof that the early Christians who thus commemorated the martyred dead were many of them uneducated persons--but for all that they crushed the wisdom of the sages and smote the gods of classic lands. They smote Jupiter and Saturn until they were broken in pieces, and Venus and Diana fell from their seats of power.

Their conquests were not by the learning of the schools. That hindered them--the Gnostic heresy, the heresy of pretended knowledge hindered, but never helped the Church of God. Even thus at this hour the culture so much vaunted in certain places is opposed to the simplicity of the Gospel. Therefore I say we do not despise true learning, but we dare not depend upon it. We believe that God can bless and does bless thousands by very simple and humble testimonies. We are none of us to hold our tongues for Christ, because we cannot speak as the learned. We are none of us to refuse the Lord's message to ourselves because it is spoken by an unlettered messenger. We are not to select our pastors simply because of their talents and acquirements. We must regard their unction. We must look at their call, and see whether the Spirit of God is with them. If not, we shall make learning to be our bronze serpent, and it will need to be broken in pieces. Just the same also may be said of human eloquence. It is a good thing when a man can speak well, and His Words flow from his soul like a torrent, sweeping everything before them. It is good when his heart burns and flashes with a Divine enthusiasm when he speaks what he believes and feels to be of the weightiest importance.

But after all, conversions worked by carnal rhetoric, what are they? Conversions worked by human logic, what are they? "That which is born

of the flesh is flesh." Let the men speak well--the Truth of God ought to be delivered in the best of sentences. But the most noble language ever uttered by man never convinced a soul of sin, or bound up a wounded conscience, or raised a sinner from his death in sin. We must in prayer cry for the Spirit of God, and all our confidence must be placed in Him. For oratory is but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal if the Holy Spirit is not there.

Continuing our remarks with regard to the Christian Church, I will further remark that much superstition may require to be broken down among us in reference to a rigid adhesion to certain modes of Christian service. We have tried to propagate the Truth of God in a certain way, and the Lord has blessed us in it--and therefore we venerate the mode and the plan, and forget that the Holy Spirit is a free Spirit. There are persons in our Churches who object very seriously to any attempt to do good in a way which they have not seen tried before. For them custom has all the force of authority-- the traditions of the fathers are their Law.

Bold measures of evangelization shock them as innovations, as if anything could be an innovation where all is free! I know Dissenting congregations which are as conservative of their do-nothing plans as if they had received them directly from Heaven. Their life is fossilized! Their order is funereal. Their orthodoxy is sepulchral. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen," seems to be the chant of many good, but mistaken Christians among us who cannot think a thing ought to be done if it never has been done.

If there is anything clear in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, it is this--that we are not under Law, rubric, and tradition--but are brought into the liberty of the children of God, so that we are led by the Spirit, and in the service of God are not to

hunt for precedents or wait for regulations, but follow the great principles of the Word, and the guidance of the Spirit, and "by any means save some."

I have known Brethren frightened at open-air preaching, and yet what sort of preaching was there in Christ's days but open-air preaching? I have known others quite alarmed at the idea of Christ's name being mentioned in a place that had been put to commoner uses, as if in the olden times Christ could have been preached anywhere if it had been necessary to have a place consecrated to Christian worship! There is a class of persons who object to every holy project for evangelization, however right and judicious, if it happens to be novel--and they will continue to object till the work has been long in action--and has placed itself beyond fear of their opposition or need of their assistance.

We shall degenerate into a race of Scribes and Pharisees if we give way to this spirit. We shall again be slaves to traditions, legends, and old wives' fables, as bad as those which polluted Judaism. In the name of everything that is Christlike, away with all that checks the vital action of the body of Christ! Fetters are none the less burdensome for being an-

tique. Let the bronze serpent be broken if it becomes a barrier to the onward progress of the Cross. If any endeavor to force upon us the yoke of habit, let us resist them in the spirit of Paul, who, speaking of those who came in privately to spy out his liberty in Christ Jesus that they might bring him into bondage, declares "to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour."

So it is with the forms of Divine worship. I have frequently, especially in our country Churches, met with the most determined protests against the most trivial alteration of the routine of their

worship. You must sing at such a time, for they always have sung at such a point in the service. You must pray at such a moment--they always have prayed at that part of the worship. And if you can keep to the same quantity of minutes usually occupied, so much the better. The whole service, though not in a book--for our sturdy Brethren would rise in revolt against the use of a book--yet is quite as stereotyped as if it were taken from the Common Prayer.

Now I believe that in public worship we should do well to be bound by no human rules, and constrained by no stereotyped order. I like, and we have often done it, to have an interval of silence sometimes. Why not? Why should it be all vocal worship? And why not begin with the sermon occasionally? You who come in late would probably mend your manners in such a case. And then why should we not sing when we have been accustomed to pray, and pray when we have been accustomed to sing? We are under the dispensation of the Spirit, and as far as I know, the Spirit of God has not inspired those cards which I see sometimes nailed up in pulpits--"begin with short prayer, sing, read, pray, preach," and so on. A legality of form is growing up among us, and I enter my heart's protest against it. Not that you and I may have been affected by this dissenting ritualism, but practices good in themselves are to be protested against if they gender to bondage, for the Spirit of God goes where He wishes, and if we worship God according to His guidance, the worship cannot invariably take the same form.

2. Thus we have done a little image-breaking in the Church. Now let us turn to the temple of our own hearts, and we shall find much work to be done there, too. Beloved Brothers and Sisters, exercise self-examination now for the next five minutes or so. How about your present position as a Christian? You feel, probably, after ten, twelve, twenty, or thirty years of profession, very considerably in advance of

what you were when you first came to Christ. Do you feel that you are? You can now see the imprudence of your early zeal, and you can look down with unmeasured pity upon those young people who know so little about the road to Heaven--of which you know so much. And who have so little strength, of which you now have a very considerable share. Who are so little aware of the devices of Satan, against which you guard yourself so ably.

Dear brother, are you thus really congratulating yourself upon your advanced position? Are you? Then permit a little image-breaking there--for rest assured if we, any of us, come to put much value upon our attainments we shall be very near to sliding into self-confidence, carnal security, and I know not what of mischievous pride. Beloved, are you stronger than you were? But does your strength lie anywhere else than where it used to lie--in Christ? Are you wiser than you were? But have you any wisdom except that Christ is made unto you wisdom? Do you really think that twenty years' experience has changed your corruptions? That your passions have become extinct, that your tendencies to sin are not so strong as they were? That, in fact, you have less need to watch, less need to depend simply upon the merit of Christ and the work of His Spirit? Do you think so? Do You think so? "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." I have heard that more horses fall at the bottom of a hill than almost anywhere else, and I know that more professors make shipwreck towards the close of life than at any other time. As I have often told you, the falls recorded in the Old and New Testament are the falls, not of young men in the heat of passion, but of old or middle-aged men. Lot was no boy when he disgraced himself. David was no young man when he transgressed with Bathsheba. Peter was no child when he denied his Lord. These were men of experience and knowledge and attainments.

Your attainments, my Brothers and Sisters? Oh, brave word for a poor thing! Your attainments? Your attainments, poor Sinner? Apart from what you have in Christ, how absurd the language! Better still to say, "Having nothing and yet possessing all things, God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do I, then, despise Christian attainments? By no manner of means, only when they are idolized and hide the Savior--then I call them Ne-hushtan--and would gladly break them in pieces.

Again, dear Brothers and Sisters, it may be that you are enjoying very near fellowship with Christ. How delightful it is when you know by assurance that you are the Beloved's and that the Beloved is yours. When all doubts and fears have fled away and you are walking in the light of His countenance! When we are in such a condition we are like Peter, and would gladly build three tabernacles, for we say, "Master, it is good to be here." But we must mind lest we elevate our enjoyments into the place of our Master. We may even make our communion with Christ an idol, by putting it before Christ Himself.

I am not saved and safe because I am greatly rejoicing. Not my enjoyment, but Jesus saves me! He alone saves me. If my communion were interrupted, I should still be secure in Him, and because now I enjoy it sweetly, it does not add to my actual security or acceptance before God. An old Puritan quaintly says, "suppose a loving husband were to give to his wife many rings and jewels out of love to her, and she should come to think so highly of the love-tokens that she sat and looked at them, and admired them, and forgot her husband?" Would He not be rather inclined to take these things away to turn her love once again to himself? So with our Graces and our enjoyments. If we think too much of them the iconoclastic hammer will come in, and these things will vanish because they have provoked the Lord to jealousy.

Further, we have a little more work to do. You have, and you thank God for it, some good friends in this world, dear Friends, Christian friends, reliable friends. Hold them fast. But it is not always easy to keep these friends where they should be. There is a text that might save us a thousand sorrows if we thought more of it--"Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm. But blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." And there is another text of the same tone--"Cease you from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Friendship, by all means, and confidence in those who deserve it, by all means--but pass not the bound which God has set--think not that to be immutable which is but clay. And fancy not that to be faithful which is but flesh. Changing circumstances have changed many hearts, and altered positions and conditions have made sad havoc among friendships which seemed to be eternal. Lean on your friends, but not with all your weight. Trust and be confident as you may, but let your inmost reliance, your deepest faith lean on that arm which you cannot see, but which arm, nevertheless, upholds the universe!

Now a word that may cut more keenly still, and it concerns our dear relationships in the family circle. The last thing I should do is to speak against the love that is due to husband, and wife, and child, and Brethren. Christianity fosters all the domestic loves. We love none the less our dear ones below because our heart still loves our Savior above all. But, Beloved, there is such a thing as putting child or wife or husband into Jesus' place. The beloved one was meant to be loved, but not to be worshipped. That little gem was given to be prized, but not to be valued beyond the Pearl of Great Price.

Beware of desecrating your earthly love into idolatry--rather

consecrate it by seeking God's glory in it, and it shall be well with you. If you are a child of God, whatever idol you worship, God's great hammer will be lifted up against it. You will lose the child, or it may live to prove your curse. You will lose the love you think so precious, or you may have it, but it will lead you astray. Beloved, I know there is work to be done in many of our hearts in this respect.

And so there is yet further to do in the pursuits of our minds. I do not see why a Christian man should not have for a pursuit the attainment of eminence in learning, proficiency in science, or success in business. If he does not do so he is not likely to distinguish himself, and there can be no reason why a Christian should be always in the rear. But these lawful worldly aims must be kept in their place and be subservient to higher ends, or else what is right in itself will get to be wrong through being put in the wrong place.

You may pursue that branch of knowledge, young man, but seek first the kingdom of God. Do you desire to be an artist and rank with Landseer and Millais? I would not discourage you for a moment. In the skillful use of that pencil may you rise to the highest position in your art. But for all that, do not worship the palette--do not bow down before the outspread canvas--there is something better to live for than to paint. Student, I do not wonder at your desire to excel. Why should not Christian men be first in all departments of learning?

But after all, there are higher objects than zoology, geology, mechanics, or astronomy. Do then, I pray you, guard against putting anything where Christ should be. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Ever God first, and then the rest that you may glorify God by what ability or influence you have obtained by His Grace. I charge you

look to this on pain of seeing idols broken, and aspirations destroyed.

Thus have we gone into the temple of your hearts, and used the hammer a little there.

II. Now I desire for awhile to speak with those who ARE SEEKERS OF JESUS. There is some idol-breaking to be done for them. I pray God the Holy Spirit to do it. The way of salvation lies in coming to Christ, in trusting in Jesus Christ alone. Why is it that so many refuse to do this and remain in the border land of desire unsaved? Many think that they ought to be much better than they are--they have faults to be corrected, their minds are in a wrong condition, they must be put right--they are trying to do this with the intention when they feel better to put their trust in Jesus.

O that my hammer might smash all that to pieces! My Friend, you ought to be better, your mind ought to be in a better state. I grant all that. But if you put this improvement of yours in the place of the work of Christ, you are going the sure way to destruction. Your righteousness is not what is needed, but Christ's righteousness. And if you conceive that you must fit yourself for Him, you know not the Gospel. Come to Jesus as you are.

Your conscious sinfulness and imperfections will but enable you to prize His perfection and His power to save. Do not look to yourself for a part of your salvation. If you do, I must call your goodness, "Nehushtan," and compare it to dross and dung! Look to Jesus, and Jesus only--all else will deceive you. See how He carried sin, and was punished for it, and how His righteousness avails with the Father, and look not to any preparations or fitness which you may conceive to be in yourself.

With some the Nehushtan which they set up is their sense of sin. Either they do not feel their need of Christ as they ought, or else they do feel their need, and therefore think they are in a fair condition. Now,

believe me, you often misunderstand the promises of Christ. That matchless promise, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," is thought to be a promise made to those who labor and are heavy laden. My Brethren, the promise is not made to laboring nor to being heavy laden. "What is it made to?" you ask. The promise is made to coming to Christ.

"Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." You may be weary and heavy laden as long as you will, but you will not get rest by laboring. It is coming to Christ that gives rest. Do not think that feeling your need of Christ is salvation. It is coming to Christ, depending, relying upon Him alone, that brings you to the blessing. Do not delay, then. The most proper sense of sin, though it may be commendable as the bronze serpent--if you rest in it--it must be broken in pieces, for it is an antichrist.

Many persons are resting in their fear of self-deception. "I would gladly trust in Christ," says one, "but I am so afraid of being self-deceived." And do you think that your being afraid of presumption is a better thing than believing God's testimony concerning His Son? You must think so, or else you would not keep it in preference to believing. To believe in Jesus Christ--that is, to rest upon God's own Son who was put to death because our sin was laid upon Him-- to believe in Him simply with a childish confidence is the way of salvation. But you prefer not to do it on the ground that you are afraid of being self-deceived! You prefer tarrying in a state of caution to advancing to faith. Away with your idolized bronze serpent--away with it! Give up the fear or keep it, which you will, but come to Jesus!

Many of you, I am afraid, are resting in sermon hearing. "I shall get good one of these days," says one, "I am always at the Tabernacle, or always at my Church," or, "I go to hear a good Gospel preacher, and I

shall get a blessing." What? Do you think salvation comes through merely hearing sermons? Ah, Sirs, responsibility comes when the Gospel is honestly preached, but nothing more, unless you believe the message which you hear. Faith is the vital point, the coming to Jesus. I pour ridicule on sermon hearing, and sermon preaching, too, if you look to this as the groundwork of salvation. It is not the poor trumpet that makes the jubilee--it does but proclaim it. O that you would obtain the liberty which the trumpet proclaims!

But some of you may say, "I not only hear sermons, but I read the Bible regularly!" Yes, and I commend you for it, but if you imagine you are in a good and proper state because you are a Bible reader, I must tell you that as an unbeliever you are condemned already, and, while reading the Bible, that very Bible itself condemns you! Go on with the reading of it--I am in hopes that you may get beyond that, to be a believer in Jesus. But as long as you are not a believer in Jesus, you may read your Bible as much as ever you will--it will not--cannot save you.

What does our Savior say? He says (so I read the original), "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they that testify of Me. But you will not come unto Me that you may have life." A great

many in His days studied the Scriptures, but would not believe in Him. You may be lost with a knowledge of Scripture as well as without it, if you tarry in the letter and go not to the Spirit of the Word.

There are others who are making an idol of brass out of their prayers. "I am not saved," says one, "I have not trusted Christ, but I do pray." Neither do I find fault with your prayers any more than I have a right to find fault with the bronze serpent in its place. but if you suppose you will be saved by praying, you are greatly mistaken. He that will not be saved by the Cross shall never be saved by his closet. He that

will not be saved by Christ's wounds, shall not find salvation by his own groans and tears. There on the Cross is all your hope, Sinner, and if you will not have it, there is no other. No, though you hardened your knees with kneeling and blinded your eyes with weeping, you would find no gate of Heaven and no hope of mercy but in the crucified Savior. Fly to Jesus and you are saved! Keep from Jesus and your prayers do but insult the Savior, for you place them in His place. I must break up these things--they are idols if they hide the Cross of Jesus.

And so, to close, it is with all the unbelieving reasoning and rebellious considering which some people so abound with, seekers of Christ will, some of them, continually start new difficulties. If you solve one doubt they get another. If you solve that, they invent a third. Their doubts, and reasonings, and questions are like an endless chain--pull up one link and it brings up another. Their suspicions are like a chain of dredging buckets that come up all full of mire, and over they go and empty themselves but to come up full again.

There is no comforting them! Their soul refuses to be comforted. If one tenth part of the ingenuity they use in rebelling against the command of God, which bids them believe, were used in simply investigating what they are told to believe, they would come to faith, and be saved from their doubts. Do you think you are wise in trying to discover reasons why you should be damned? I can hardly conceive of a man in the condemned cell--and that is where every unbeliever is--trying to find out reasons why he should not be pardoned. There lies the pardon before him, and he is perversely searching the whole treasury of logic to find out arguments against his pardon, and reasons for his execution.

You fool! Will you perish through your reasonings? Sinner, let me say to you--let your artful doubts and reasonings be nailed to yonder tree

where Jesus died. Crucify them. You suspect too much, you consider too much, you question too much. Here it is--receive it as a little child receives his father's word--"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "Whosoever believes in Him is not condemned."

"He that has the Son of God has life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." For, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." Here is all simplicity! Do not mystify it. Here all is clear as noonday! Do not shut out the light. God grant you Grace to break up these idols of yours, and take your Savior now, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Chapter 53

The Saint One With His Savior

(No. 961)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 20, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." 1 Corinthians 6:17.

THE connection of our text is very terrible. When we are reading the sixteenth verse one seems to remember Sodom, its infamy, and the fire and brimstone that came down from Heaven upon it. But here in our text we enter into Jerusalem, the holy city, whose streets are of purity so rich and rare as to be comparable to gold clear as transparent glass. And there we seem to behold the Great White Throne of the thrice Holy, surrounded by the white robed bands of the immaculate. In looking at the text I call to mind John Bunyan's description of the way through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It was an "exceedingly narrow" path, not readily kept. On the right hand the dreadful gulf, and on the left the fearful quagmire.

See in my text a road fit for angels, and for the angels' Master, and yet on either hand, in the sixteenth and eighteenth verses behold the fiends and devils howling for their prey! Happy is he who finds that path which the eagle's eye has not seen, that center of the King's highway of which it is written, "No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." How glorious is that "way of holiness"! Gaze on it--it is clear as the sapphire, bright as the brilliant crystal. Deep down in its depths your eyes may look, and in it there is nothing to obscure, it is as the holiness of God Himself, a purity so wonderful that conscious of our shortcomings we cry, "It is

high, I cannot attain unto it."

The exceeding elevation of the Believer in being joined unto the Lord appears all the more marvelous when it is set, as in the text, in contrast with the dreadful impurity into which we might have fallen, and against which we are still solemnly warned, as if to remind us that our indwelling corruption would drag us down if Divine Grace did not prevent it. Brethren, sin is never seen to be so truly horrible as when we behold it in the light of Christian privilege. It is a terrible thing for a creature to rebel against its Creator, but for the adopted son of God to be disobedient to his ever loving Father, this is worse by far.

Sin is black if we see it in the dim twilight of spiritual conviction when our conscience is half awakened, but it grows blacker than Hell's murkiest midnight when we set it in contrast with the amazing brightness of the Divine favor which has shone upon us, His elect--redeemed, justified, and adopted people. That yonder professor should be so careless and so inconsistent is sad, but when I remind him that he is one of the redeemed I trust he will feel his lukewarmness to be monstrous. When man is chosen of God and washed in the Savior's blood, must it not seem to angels a prodigy of human depravity, a marvel of human corruption, that such a one should for a moment forget the way of holiness and desire the paths of iniquity?

In ourselves how heinous is all transgression, seeing we have been the objects of such ceaseless, boundless, loving kindness! For us to follow afar off, to backslide, to grow indifferent is indescribable baseness, a violation of the sacred demands of gratitude. If the more frequent sins of Christians appear thus heinous in contrast with their great privileges, much more loathsome must be vices of the fouler kind, such as Paul here speaks of--sins not to be named among us, or even thought

of without horror. God forbid that any of us who claim to be of the body of Christ should degrade ourselves by filthy lusts of the flesh. Casting a veil over the matter forbidden, not that we may forget it altogether, but may turn our eyes away from beholding vanity, we shall now endeavor to conduct you to the elevated platform of the text itself. I see in it, first, a mysterious deep which I cannot fathom. And, therefore, in the second place, we will sail across it while we speak of a manifest Grace which glistens on its surface.

I. First, then, there is in the text A MYSTERIOUS DEEP. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." What does that joining to the Lord mean which is mentioned here? There is a joining to the Lord in election. We were chosen in

Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world, and by Sovereign Love we were predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. There was a further joining to the Lord in Covenant, when Jesus became of old the Head of His Church. As Adam was the head of all that came of his loins, so is Christ the Head of a spiritual seed to whom the promise belongs by the Everlasting Covenant signed, sealed, and ordered in all things and sure.

Further, Christ was joined to us when He took upon Himself our Nature. When He came into this world and was made a Man, then He was truly joined to us. He left His Father, and was joined unto His bride, and they two became one flesh. "For both He that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them Brethren." He was one with us in Nature, one in our sufferings, one in our life and death, one, too, in bearing our curse, taking upon Himself our sin. All this makes up a glorious joining unto the Lord--but it is not the doctrine taught here--for all that are joined to Christ in the Divine purpose are not yet made of one spirit

with Him, for many of them are still living in their natural ignorance, little aware of the Grace ordained of old for them.

They are yet to be brought out from the house of bondage. Their election is to be followed by their calling. The Lord Jesus who is God's Covenant is yet to be revealed to the eye of their faith, and a living union to Christ is yet to be created. This last work of Grace is not yet worked in the uncalled, and they are not in that sense joined to the Lord. A vital and spiritual union is meant in the text, a union which is matter of living experience, and is worked in us when we are born again, when we pass from darkness into Christ's marvelous Light--when we rise from the death of sin to find the Lord Jesus to be our life.

From that moment we are "dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." From the moment of our regeneration, we who were once the branches of the wild olive are grafted into the good olive. We who were cast out like withered branches to be burned, are grafted into the ever-living Vine, and become one with Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the union here spoken of, and he that is joined unto the Lord in that way by a work of the Holy Spirit radically and thoroughly changing him, and renewing him, and bringing him into oneness with Christ, is said to be the "one spirit."

But what does that word, "one spirit" mean? Well, we must get at it by degrees. You may guess at its meaning from the fact that in other parts of Scripture the union between Christ and His people is described by that of a marriage union, and then it is said, "these two shall be one flesh." But to take off the carnal edge of the metaphor, lest we fall into any grossness of thought, we are told that we in union with our Lord are one spirit. The union is a spiritual one. It is a great mystery, says the Apostle, when he speaks concerning Christ and His

Church.

You get a glimmer, then, of what he means. There is a spiritual union, as real as when two are made one flesh. But it is not to be misread, and corruptly thought of as a carnal, material matter. It is a deep Truth of God belonging to the world of spirit. Try to get at it again. Remember that Christ and His people have one Spirit. The Holy Spirit who quickens us anointed Him. The Holy Spirit who illuminated us gave to Jesus Christ the unction with which He came to preach the reconciling Word to man. "The Spirit of the Lord," says He, "is upon Me, for He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted."

The Holy Spirit on Christ is the same Holy Spirit as upon us. The oil which ran down Aaron's beard, and descended to the skirts of his garments, was the same holy anointing which was poured upon his reverend head. Yes, and glory be to God for the Truth--we have the same Spirit with the Lord Jesus Himself. The Apostle says, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all." And again, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free. And have been all made to drink into one Spirit." But we need not stay there, for we may add--we all have the same Holy Spirit as Jesus had. The foot is baptized into the same Spirit as the head. The ear not only has the same Spirit as the hand, but has the same Spirit as the glorious crowned and adored Head of the Church.

That is not all the meaning of the text, though it helps us to come near it. We have a greater mystery here. Some have read it, "we are of one spirit with Him," that is to say, we come to think and feel as Jesus does, have common motives, aims, emotions, and desires. This is most true, and is the practical meaning of the text, but a more spiritual sense is under it. Let us, however, turn this over a moment.

We who are joined unto the Lord are of one spirit with Him--the one Holy Spirit has worked us unto the same thing.

As Jesus is actuated by an intense desire for the glory of God, the Holy Spirit has worked us unto the same fervent longing. His meat and drink is also ours. Into His labors and His joys we enter. This meaning is high--O for Grace to

reach it in our own characters! Yet the text says not that we are of one spirit, but we are one spirit. We not only have one spirit, and are of one spirit, but we are one spirit. Now, what shall I say of this? I shall say nothing but that this is a matter to be understood only by the spiritual mind, and not to be readily, if at all, expounded in human words. It is not a Truth for which we have adequate expressions--letters, syllables, words fail us.

This much we can say though more is left unsaid--there is a union between Christ and His people most deep, most mysterious, most essential. If you would know it, ponder this sentence of our Lord's prayer, "I in them and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." Christ and His saints actually are one spirit. Ah, the depth! Your contemplation, if aided by the heavenly Interpreter, may assist you. As for me, I should but darken counsel by words without knowledge if I tried to open up what these words rather conceal than reveal.

Yet an illustration or two. We have known on earth friends who have become one spirit--intimacy and mutual admiration have ripened friendship into unity till the one seemed to be the complement of the other--and the mention of one suggested the other. They pursued one object with equal footsteps. They never differed, but appeared to have one soul in two bodies. The death of one almost necessarily involved the death of the other--the two were inseparable companions. Damon and Pythias lived over again in them. Jonathan and David seemed risen from

the dead. Feebly, and but feebly, this reflects the image of our text.

So have we seen one spirit in another relationship, which is often used as the token of the union between Christ and His people, between the husband and the wife, of which we shall speak more particularly later, where there has been one love, one aim, one object. Like two stars, the wedded pair have shone with such blended rays as to have seemed more one than two. One name, one heart, one house, one interest, one love--they have also had one spirit. More fully, still, our text is illustrated by the branch and the stem. The branch in the vine is nothing if separated from the stem. Its sap is the very same sap that is in the stem--one life is in the stem and the branch--and they are both struggling for the same object, both seeking to produce and ripen the fruit.

They have no different aim, or even existence. The stem does not hoard for itself, nor the branch blossom for itself. The branch and stem are one vine. They are nothing separated from each other, their life one and their design one. See here again, as in a glass darkly, an amazing spiritual Truth. Yet more fully is this gracious union between us and our Lord brought out in the metaphor of the union of the member with the body. In that case there is, indeed, one spirit, not only in a vital but in an intellectual sense. If there is life in this finger, it is identically the same life that is in the head. But one spirit quickens all the parts of the body, whether comely or uncomely, whether base or honorable.

And so in the whole Church of God the life of Christ is the life of His people. The spirit of Christ is the spirit of His people. They are not two but one. The mystical union is so complete that even the marriage bond, of which we spoke just now, cannot fully come up to it--it is but an earthly symbol of a yet truer heavenly reality. We who are joined

unto the Lord are one spirit. I say no more. What I have said may rather conduct you to the door than open it. But there is One whose work it is to be the Revealer of secrets, ask Him and He shall reveal even this unto you.

II. May the Holy Spirit help us while considering the second head. On the very surface of the text, there is A MANIFEST GRACE. Our one spirit with Christ reveals itself practically in a manifest sympathy of spirit between us and our Lord, so that we, being one spirit, are seen to be actuated and impelled by the same influences. We are of one spirit with Jesus. That meaning I shall try and bring out. Union with Christ in these days, when religion wears her holiday garments, is a word with a pleasant sound, and because of its honorable esteem men would gladly possess it.

But alas, they know not what it is! They hang a cross at their necks, or embroider it on their garments, or stamp it on their books--and fancy that this gives them some degree of unity to the Crucified. But, Brothers and Sisters, this matter lies quite out of their reach. To be one spirit with Christ, much more is needed than to bear the Christian name. You may call yourself a Christian, or a Brother, or a Sister, or one of the Society of Jesus, and in so doing you may have selected what you think to be the most orthodox of terms by which to designate yourself and the congregation to which you belong--but union to the Lord stands not in name only.

There were those of old who called themselves Jews and were not--their taking the name did not give them the nature of Israelites. They that are joined unto the Lord may not always be known by the same name. They may be called Christians at Antioch and Jews at Philippi (Acts 16:20), but a right or a wrong name will not change the real character. Call a poppy a rose and you will not, thereby, give it perfume. Perhaps none

in all the world are less joined to the Lord
than some who adore the very name of Christian, and make an idol of the outward sign of the Cross. Neither is true union to Christ to be gained by mere outward profession. You may be baptized in water, but unless you are baptized into the Holy Spirit, you know not what union with Christ is. If in Baptism we are buried with Him, then it is well, indeed, but the sign in itself is nothing, for Simon Magus, though baptized, had no part nor lot in the matter.

We may sit at the Lord's Table with His people, yes, in the company of Apostles, and yet be sons of perdition! He may eat and drink in our streets, and yet may never know us. To eat the visible bread is not to be one with His mystical body. Union with Christ lies deeper than name, lies deeper than outward signs and seals of Church fellowship--and it even lies deeper than the performance of some apparently good actions and the use of religious words in conversation. We may do many things in His name, yes, and great things, too, for in His name many cast out devils and did many wonderful works and so were partakers of the powers of the world to come. And yet they were rejected by Him at the last as unknown of Him.

When judgment begins at the House of God small store will be set by mere visible union, for the branches in Christ after this fashion, not bearing fruit, will be cast forth, and withered, and burned in the fire. We must be rooted and built up in Him. He must be formed in us or it will little avail us to have been numbered with His disciples. The superficial, the nominal, and the outward will not suffice. He that is joined unto the Lord must be one spirit--deep down in the very vitals of our being must this union with Jesus Christ most eminently reside, and in our hearts and minds must His Truth be found.

This is solemn teaching, and it ought, like the candle of the Lord, to

search the secret parts of our nature. The carnal mind loves that which is outward, for it can readily comply with it, and that without Divine assistance. But the unregen-erate heart kicks against that which is purely spiritual, for it cannot understand it, and here it is compelled to feel its own powerlessness, except to counterfeit with base imitations. My Brethren, this is a discerning Word, dividing between the joints and marrow, and discovering the thoughts and intents of the heart. You who are quickened with the incorruptible Seed, and discern spiritual things, come to the search, and see well to it that you are joined unto the Lord. Not in the form of godliness only, but in the power of it, also.

Let us give you, for your assistance, an illustration of what unity of spirit is as we see it among men, for here we may dimly see it as between the Lord and our souls. We will take a copy from that rare conjugal union which exists among those who realize the highest ideal of the married life. Sometimes we have seen a model marriage, founded in pure love and cemented in mutual esteem. There the husband acts as a tender head, and the wife, as a true spouse, realizes the model marriage relation, and sets forth what our oneness with the Lord ought to be. She delights in her husband, in his person, his character, his affection.

To her he is not only the chief and foremost of mankind, but in her eyes he is all in all, her heart's love belongs to him and to him only. She finds sweetest content and solace in his company, his fellowship, his fondness. He is her little world, her Paradise, her choice treasure. To please him she would gladly lay aside her own pleasure to find it doubled in gratifying him. She is glad to sink her individuality in his. She seeks no name for herself. His honor is reflected upon her, and she rejoices in it. She would defend his name

with her dying breath--safe enough is he where she can speak for him. The domestic circle is her kingdom, and that she may there create happiness and comfort is her lifework, and his smiling gratitude is all the reward she seeks.

Even in her dress she thinks of him. Without constraint she consults his taste and thinks nothing beautiful which is obnoxious to his eye. A tear from his eye, because of any unkindness on her part, would grievously torment her. She asks not how her behavior may please a stranger, or how another's judgment may be satisfied with her behavior. Let her Beloved be content and she is glad. He has many objects in life, some of which she does not quite understand, but she believes in them all, and anything that she can do to promote them she delights to perform.

He lavishes love on her and she on him. Their object in life is common. There are points where their affections so intimately unite that none could tell which is first and which is second. To see their children growing up in health and strength, to see them holding posts of usefulness and honor is their mutual concern. In this and other matters they are fully one. Their wishes blend, their hearts are indivisible.

By degrees they come very much to think the same thoughts. Intimate association creates conformity.

We have known this to become so complete that at the same moment the same utterance has leaped to both their lips. Happy woman and happy man! If Heaven is found on earth they have it! At last the two are so welded, so engrafted on one stem, that their old age presents a lovely attachment, a common sympathy by which its infirmities are greatly alleviated, and its burdens are transformed into fresh bonds of love.

So happy a union of will, sentiment, thought, and heart exists between them that the two streams of their life have washed away the dividing

bank and run on as one broad current of united existence till their common joy falls into the main ocean of felicity.

Such a sight, it may be, is not commonly seen, but it is inexpressibly beautiful, and is a fair type of what the Christian ought to be in his oneness with his Lord. For the Believer there should be no attractive beauty but in Christ, nothing that can charm him, stir the deeps of his soul, or move his nobler passions, but the glorious person of Emmanuel, the chief among ten thousand. He loved us and gave Himself for us--we also must love Him and give Him our whole selves. For us the one object of life is to please our Lord. We should not dare to sin, not because we are slavishly afraid of punishment, but because we would not grieve the Bridegroom of our souls. We must labor for His cause, not because of legal demands, but because we know no higher happiness under Heaven than to make Him honored and to let Him see in us, and through us, of the travail of His soul.

Our Lord has great ends and objects. We cannot understand them all, but to our utmost we desire to promote them by suffering or by service. Our prayer is, "Lord, show me what You would have me to do." We would be tenderly sensitive to His desire, not surrendered to it only, but delighting in whatever He wills. We reckon it our honor to be permitted to help Him, however humbly, to work out any of His designs. As to the children of His Grace, both His and ours, regenerated by His Spirit and converted by our ministries, they are doubly dear to us, and their perfection we seek with Him. Our constant enquiry is, can we do anything for them? Can we call home the backsliding? Can we comfort the desolate? Can we help the poor and needy? Can we be of any service to the lambs of His flock?--

"There's not a lamb in all His flock We would disdain to feed."

We would do anything by which we might show our love to Him, for our

union of heart, and our union of purpose, our union of thought with Him, are all deep and true. Such a Christian grows to think as Christ thinks till the teachings of Jesus are plain to him. He never tries to tone down the Gospel as certain philosophic minds are ever doing, because they are not in union with the great Teacher's heart. But he comes to see things from the Lord's point of view, and knows his Master's meaning as by a sacred instinct. Blessed consummation when our hearts at last are all wrapped up in Jesus, even as the bush at Horeb was all on fire with God.

Just as Jesus has set all His love on them, so they come to set all their love on Him, and they can say with the Apostle, "For me to live is Christ," while the gain which they anticipate in death is the gain of being nearer to their Beloved, and forever beholding the glory of His face. I have given you an illustration, and have worked it out but poorly, but even had I worked it out to perfection, it must necessarily fall short of the incomparable "one spirit" which dwells in our glorious Head and all His members. Go on till you sing with quaint old Francis Quarles--

"Even like two little bank-dividing brooks,
That wash the pebbles with their wanton streams,
And having ranged and searched a thousand nooks,
Meet both at length in silver-breasted Thames,
Where in a greater current they conjoin.
So I my best Beloved's am; so He is mine.
Even so we met. And after long pursuit,
Even so we joined, we both became entire.
No need for either to renew a suit,
For I was flax, and He was flames of fire.
Our firm united souls did more than twine,

So I my best Beloved's am; so He is mine." Where such union as that exists, what does it produce? Its fruits are precious. They who are thus one spirit with Christ live for the same end. He lived for God's glory. "Know you not," said He in His youth, "that I must be about My Father's business?" In His riper years He said, "It is My meat and my drink to do the will of Him that sent Me." He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit in that respect. For him the great, one, only thing is to glorify God. In such a case the soul sees everything in this one light, and asks concerning all, how will it affect the kingdom of God? Even in reading the newspaper one says, "Great events are transpiring in politics, how will these work for the glory of God?" The engineer considers the effect the war may have on the world, the politician thinks of the balance of power, the reformer meditates on its results as to human progress, but the man who is joined unto the Lord prays only, "Father, glorify Your name." To him the profit of his business is only profit so far is it will enable him to help the Master's cause, and his honor is no honor unless he can raise out of it some matter for Jehovah's praise. The glory of God, the glory of God, the glory of God--this was the one target towards which our Lord went onward in His life. Like a shot that crashes through everything until it reaches its mark, so must our spirits find no target but the glory of God! And if we are one spirit with Christ, it will be so. God's glory, God's glory will be first, last, midst, everywhere, everything. All for God, and God in all, will be our motto, as "hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come," is our daily prayer.

Further, if we are joined to Christ, so as to be one spirit, we shall seek the same end for the same reason. He desired the glory of God not for His own glory, but because He loved God. He was one with the

Father. He loved the Father, therefore would He see the Father glorified. Brethren, it is easy to seek the glory of God with a view to your own glory. Did you ever find yourself doing so, desiring that the children in your class should be converted, that in the school it might be said what a successful teacher is so-and-so? Oh, how have I sought to wring that black drop out of my spirit, when the desire to bring souls to Christ has been backed with the desire that I might have a good standing as a successful minister!

Into Christ's thoughts so base an element never entered--He sank Himself in God. He knew His Father would give Him the reward, and for the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame--but Self-seeking never threw its alloy into the pure gold of His devotion to the Father. If we are one spirit with Christ, self will be swallowed up in God. Lord, do what You will with me, so long as You are glorified! If I can glorify You best in silence, then let me never speak again.

If it is most for Your glory that I should die, though my life appears to be useful to Your Church, yet let me end my days. If it will glorify You that I should be unsuccessful, that I should be in the world's judgment a disappointed man, perhaps a fool without brain enough to succeed, Lord, let me be a fool, or an idiot for You! Only glorify Yourself in me, and that is enough. This is true oneness of spirit with Jesus. Self is nothing. God is to be All in All. Comfort, esteem, joy, and even life will be as the small dust of the balance to a man filled with Christ's spirit.

Then we shall come, if we are one spirit with Christ, to aim at the glory of God by the same means. How did He aim at it? By the conversion of souls--not by being made a king, not by being called rabbi. He sought for the souls of little children, of peasant women, and of

outcasts. If my mind is as Christ's mind, I shall seek God's glory by following after the waifs and strays of society--by bringing in backsliders, by seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel--laboring by any means to save some.

How, my Brethren, are you bending your souls towards the conversion of sinners? It is a great mark of oneness of spirit with Christ when we have a great tenderness towards lost souls. Do you ever think of lost souls? Do you ever bring yourselves to the painful consideration of this huge city, so much larger than Jerusalem in our Savior's day, and, I was about to say, equally wicked? Do you never pour out floods of tears for it because it knows not its day, and is neglectful of the invitations of Grace? If you are one spirit with Christ you will weep with Him. You will burn with an ardent passion to gather this city's children beneath the wings of mercy.

You will pray for them, sigh for them, live for them, and persevere in labor for them. Your thought about a person will not merely be what trade you can do with him, or how much you may trust him in business, but, "How much good can I do him, and can I find an opportunity in any way of bringing him as a jewel to adorn my Savior's crown?" If our spirits were one with Christ's we should each one be missionaries of the Cross, bearing witness to His saving power.

Beloved, with such a spirit we should be content to use the same modes as our Lord. Christ's modes of winning souls were very simple, and He always adhered to them--teaching, preaching, living, suffering, and dying were His whole art. Some nowadays seem tired of Christ's plans, and hunt up more rapid methods. I do not believe that Jesus ever strained after effect by animal excitement. He did not strive and cry, and become fanatical, and try to excite poor ignorant people, who know not what they do, to say what they do not understand. He went

to work by instructing the ignorant, enlightening their consciences and understandings, and gradually leading them to Himself.

When His spirit is ours we shall be better satisfied with that old-fashioned way of Gospel preaching which the critics nowadays are so fond of sneering at. We shall feel this is the best way--this hard, plodding way that does not usually produce a great mass of converts all at once--this is best, for Jesus thought so. We shall pine for large harvests, but go on sowing the same Seed, and preaching His Gospel and no new one of our own. What was wisdom to Him will be wisdom to us.

Then shall we, if we are of one spirit with Jesus, go to work as He did, with the same emotions. If we had but six men thoroughly of one spirit with Jesus, London would soon be shaken from end to end. But where are they? God make all His servants such, and we shall hear a new sort of preaching to what is current at this hour. For when Jesus preached, it was tremendous preaching! True, it was pleasing, attractive, interesting, but was far more--it was full of deep heart-power, such as made men see His solemn earnestness--and such as overcame men's souls.

His soul, as it were, leaped upon them in all the majesty of love's Omnipotence. O that we felt as He did the weight of souls, the guilt of sin, the terror of the wrath to come, and the tenderness of Divine mercy! If these great principles actuated and moved our spirit as they moved His, we should rise to a higher standard, and our age would know it.

Let me add that if we are fully joined to our Lord, and of one spirit with Him, we shall have the same tastes as Jesus. What He loves will charm us, what He hates we shall loathe. We shall then come to have the same will with Him. As one said, "If God wills not as I will, yet at any rate we will be agreed, for I will will as He wills if He will but

graciously enable me." If I cannot have things as I would like, I will like to have them as Jesus pleases. Oh, to have the two wills, the human and Divine perfectly coinciding--this is perfection! Brethren, if this unity between our spirit and Christ's spirit goes on we shall abide in Him, and He will abide in us.

Oh, to be our Beloved's and to know that He is ours! I cannot resist quoting another two verses from old Quarles, they so depict my ideal-- "Nor time, nor place, nor chance, nor death can bow My least desires unto the least remove; He's firmly mine by oath. I His by vow; He is mine by faith. And Iam His bylove; He's mine by water. Iam His by wine; Thus I my best Beloved's am; thus He is mine. He is my altar. I His holy place; Iam His guest. And He my living food; I'm His by penitence. He mine by Grace; I'm His by purchase. He is mine by blood He's my supporting wall. And I His vine-- Thus I my best Beloved's am; thus He is mine." I have many things to say, but time fails me, and therefore let me just pour out a few thoughts. There would be produced in you and in me, if we were joined unto the Lord, great oneness of aim in our service of God. We have a dozen aims now, but if we were of one spirit with Jesus we should have but one object in life. A man dies, and they say, "Ah, he died a martyr to his science." Another dies, and they say, "He killed himself with attention to his business." When will men be thus said to die for Christ?

Men commonly say of their fellows, "He is a man of one idea, he lives for it. Wherever he is he must always ride his hobby." How I wish they would say the same of Christians! Wherever our Lord was, not imprudently, but with true wisdom, He was sure to pursue His life work. Where Jesus was there would the Gospel be heard or seen before long. If He sat to eat bread at a Pharisee's house nobody could suspect Him of being a Pharisee, or need to ask who He was. His speech before long

betrayed Him, for the one object of His soul was uppermost. May it ever be so with us! May we be of one idea and that one idea to glorify God through the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ!

This would give us, beside unity of purpose, great force, great fervor. We should feel this in private. Our prayers, if we had the spirit of Christ would be very different from what they are. This would be visible in public, also. Our public service of God would never be so sluggish and sleepy as it now is. With what ardor did the Savior burn! Would God that

same fire dropped into my soul, and utterly consumed me as a living sacrifice. This would produce in each of us an abiding pertinacity. Defeated in one place we should try in another. It would be with us a determination never to be overcome in doing good. Like Jesus who sought the souls of men, not in a languid search, but over hill and dale till He went down into death's cold shade and traversed the sepulcher that He might deliver them, so we also in honor and dishonor, in evil report and good report, in poverty and wealth, in life and death, should still be seeking the glory of God and the salvation of the sons of men.

This same spirit would work in us a wonderful serenity of spirit. If our spirit were like Christ's spirit--altogether set on God's glory--we should not be disturbed and vexed so soon as we are with little, petty remarks of men, nor should we even be moved by great calamities. If any disaster happened to us we should only say, "How can I use this for God's glory?" If prosperity smiled on us, we should ask, "How can I make this glorify my Lord?" We should not be cast down by the one nor lifted up by the other. If men sneered at us we should say, "It is well that they think little of me, for now if God will bless my efforts they will think the more of God and know that the work was not done by my power."

If, on the other hand, we find men thinking highly of us, we should say, "How can I use the influence I thus obtain to advance the great cause of my Lord and Master?" When self is dead our sorrows are sweet. When self-seeking is gone, then serene is the calm lake of the soul, unruffled by the storms of ambition which continually toss with blustering breath the minds which seek themselves. I am persuaded, Brethren, your highest state, your happiest condition--will be when you are so joined with the Lord as to be one spirit.

Lastly, what does all this teach us by way of practical lesson? These three things--First, see here a rebuke for us. We have been joined to Christ, but have we been manifestly one spirit with Him? Angry--was that Christ's spirit? Worldly--was that Christ's spirit? Frivolous, verging upon impropriety--was that Christ's spirit? Proud, dictatorial, slothful, repining, or unbelieving--was that Christ's spirit? O Brothers and Sisters, if you can read that verse without a tear you are either better or worse men than I! You are worse perhaps, for you do not feel the penitence you should. Or you are better, and you have no need to confess the same faults which unhappily rise before my memory. The spirit of Jesus, we have a measure of it I trust, but does not our own spirit adulterate it dreadfully!

The next practical word is one of hope. We want to have the same spirit as Christ. Well, Brethren, our hope is that we shall have it, for we are joined to the Lord, and he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Are you not joined to Jesus, my Brother, my Sister? I know what you say, "I sometimes fear I am not." Well, but what do you add to that? You add, "But I desire to be, and I do today renew my union with Him by another act of faith and confidence in Him. Dear Lord and Savior, You are my only Hope. I at this hour embrace Your Cross once more. I know You save sinners, I know that they who believe in You are

saved, and therefore I am saved. Now, being persuaded of this, I love You. O that I could kiss Your feet where the nail prints are, and that my whole life could be a washing of those feet with my tears!"

Since, then, you are joined to Christ, you are one spirit, and though it is not yet fully seen, it will be before long. There are better times coming, there are deeper degrees of Grace for you yet, only persevere.

The last word will help you to persevere. Don't you see, my Brethren, the way to get more of the spirit of Christ? It is indicated in the text, it is by thinking more of your union with Him. To be nearer the Lord is the way to be more like He is. Do not let doubts and fears endanger your fellowship with Him. You may think, "I fear I have no right to say I am one with Christ." But that suspicion will not sanctify you. It will not help you to be holier to doubt your union to your Lord.

Men never grow in Grace by departing from the Savior by unbelief. The more you need Christ the closer cling to Him. The less you are like He is the tighter hold Him. Your hope lies there. "If my spirit is not yet subdued to Your spirit, my Savior, yet I cannot let You go, for that were to drive the physician away because I am still sick. That were to renounce my friend because I have great need of him. No, but closer to You will I cling by Your Holy Spirit from this day forth, that being joined to You, I may be of one spirit."

I feel I have feebly addressed you, but at the same time I know precious Truth has been set forth. May the Holy Spirit open it up to your hearts, and bless it to your souls, and He shall be magnified. But if you have no part nor lot in this matter, may that dreadful fact lead you at this hour to seek the Savior.

Chapter 54

A Personal Application

(No. 962)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 16, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Hebrews 9:26.

IN those good old times when preachers did not grow weary, though they discoursed for three hours at a stretch. And when congregations were not given to slumber, even under such long discourses, the preacher had ample time not only to dilate upon the doctrine of his text, but to speak, also, upon what was then called "the improvement of the subject," namely, the practical and experimental application of the Truths of God taught to the cases of his hearers. Nowadays when we are restricted to three-quarters of an hour--not altogether to our loss or yours--there are occasions on which we feel our course so wide, and our time so narrow, that having found a good sea to sail upon, and objects of surpassing interest to attract our attention in the morning, we venture to resume the current of thought and follow up with the application in the evening.

Those of you who were present this morning, (See No. 911, "The Putting Away of Sin"), will not have forgotten the fullness of the text. It seemed as though every word were on fire, for we were warmed and comforted by each word as it broke on our ears and appealed to our hearts. I am sure that God the Holy Spirit spoke to some of us. If we never heard Him before, we certainly did then feel the power of His Presence in our souls. "Did not our hearts burn within us" while we

meditated upon the precious Truth contained in this passage of Holy Scripture? We saw very clearly God's way of putting away sin. We knew that sin was the great obstacle which kept us from God, and we perceived how Jesus Christ, by making Himself a Sacrifice, had completely cast down and cleared off the separating wall, so that now we have access with boldness to this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God! By His offering of Himself upon the tree, He put away sin once and for all on the behalf of those who trust in Him.

The application, then, which I proceed to take in hand is twofold--first, to some of you who are not converted, a few earnest, faithful, affectionate words. And, secondly, to you who have received Christ, and have also obtained power to become sons of God, a little tender counsel.

I. First, A FEW WORDS TO THE UNCONVERTED. You perceive it is stated in the text that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in human form, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Now, it will strike your reason that God would not have come upon earth, would not have left the royalties of Heaven if there had been some other way of putting away sin. Surely the eternal Father would never have put His Only Begotten and Well-Beloved Son to such terrible pains and griefs if there had been any other door of salvation for the lost sons of men. When Jesus said, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," you may depend upon it that it would have passed if it had been possible for us to be saved by any other method. But, inasmuch as Jesus Christ bowed His head to the stroke of His Father's sword, and poured out His soul unto death for us, we may rest assured that there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved.

Clearly then, my dear Hearers, it is your wisdom to give up every other

confidence! What are you resting in at the present moment? Have you been saying in your soul, "I am the child of gracious parents. I have never gone into profanity or open sin. It must be all right with me"? Or, have you said in your heart, "I was christened in my infancy. I have been confirmed. I have paid due attention to the ceremonials of my Church, and therefore I am saved"? Or, have you said, "I have kept the Commandments from my youth up. I have neither wronged man nor blasphemed God"? I tell you solemnly that these grounds of confidence are utterly worthless!

If you could have been saved by your Baptism, do you think Christ would have died? If your good works could have opened the gates of Heaven for you, do you think that the Christ of God Himself would have bled for sinners? If it had been possible for your godly ancestry to have lifted you to the skies, do you suppose that Jesus Christ would have been obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross? All other confidence which begins, proceeds, and ends with anything else save the Person and the work of Jesus will deceive you in the hour of death, and at the Day of Judgment. Therefore I say unto you--do not for a moment entertain it--away with it! Away with it, confide in it no longer!

If I saw you trusting yourself upon a bridge which I knew would snap in the center when your weight came fairly upon it, I should not be unkind--I should but follow the instincts of humanity in warning you not to trust to it. And I do so warn you now that other refuge there is none, save in Jesus Christ. And if you seek another refuge you insult God, you do despite to Jesus Christ, you cast yourself into a tenfold jeopardy--for he that believes not in Jesus Christ must be lost. Though you may have a zeal towards God, and go about industriously to establish your own righteousness, yet you must be a castaway, because you have not submitted yourself to the righteousness which is of God by

faith.

I beseech you, then, dear Hearer, whoever you may be, whether you are a stranger among us or one who constantly frequents this assembly, shake off your false confidences, as Paul shook the viper from his hand into the fire, or else they will poison you. They will destroy you forever and forever! But come, O come, Sinners, as you are, to the Fountain filled with blood, and rest, all helpless as you are, rest on the Foundation which God has laid in Zion, a tried Stone, a precious Cornerstone, and he that builds upon it shall never be ashamed.

That seems to flow naturally as an inference from the doctrine of the Atonement. But then, secondly--if Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in order to put away sin, must die a death so ignominious and painful, then depend upon it, sin is not so easy a thing to get rid of, nor is the penalty so easy to endure, as some would have us imagine. Sinner, when God laid our sins upon Christ, He did not spare Him. "He spared not His own Son." There was no point of the shame, the desertion, the darkness, the terror of dire foreboding, or the weight of full punishment for sin which was withheld from the sufferings of Christ. Rather it seems as if the Father, in vindication of unpitying Justice, heaped on our blessed Savior the full weight of all our transgressions, and exacted of Him the utmost chastisement and the uttermost retribution.

Ponder this and consider the question, Did God smite His Son, and shall He spare you? Did the curse fall on Christ, though He was holy in His Nature, perfect in His Character, guileless in His Heart, and innocent in His Life--upon Him who had no sin but our sin upon Him? And shall God allow you, depraved, impenitent, willful, and graceless as you are, to go unpunished? God has shown His hatred of sin in the Cross of Jesus. Not Sodom on a blaze, nor the old world drowned with the flood,

nor Pharaoh lost in the Red Sea, nor any one of the judgments of Heaven which appall us in their history, displays so much His horror against sin as the death of the Only Begotten.

There you see how, though sin entrenched itself in the Blessed and Beloved Body of Jesus Christ, yet the sword of vengeance would find it out and smite it down. And shall your crimes evade notice or pass away like shadows that leave no trace behind? What? Can the avenging angel detect no spots on your hands, no blood on your skirts, no chain of evidence to convict you? Knowing, as you all do from observation, if not from experience, that the levity with which men defy the laws of Nature does not mitigate the pain that surely follows, that every vice reaps its own retribution, and that the end of a dissolute life is most commonly a desperate death, I marvel that any of you should despise your own mercies and court your own miseries!

But if any sin could be lightly passed over, how should your sin escape, when you add to it this sin of sins, by way of aggravation--that you make God a liar by not believing on His Son? Ah, my Hearer, let no ill deceive you. God's Word is true--every transgression shall receive its just recompense of reward. He will by no means spare the guilty. Do not hope to die with the words upon your lips, "God is merciful." I know He is, but He is also just, and to those who reject His Son there is no mercy--

"How they deserve the deepest Hell, That leave the joys abo ve! What claims of vengeance must they feel Who slight the bands of love!"

You shall find it so. Either Christ must bear your sins for you, and you must see your sin punished in the wounds of Im-manuel, or you must feel them punished in yourself forever! O Soul, which shall it be? May God make the election for you, and may you be saved in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I wish I could speak so as to get to your heart, but the Lord alone can do that. I can only reach the ears. Will you, however, please notice the particular object for which Christ appeared? Perhaps that may touch your conscience. It was to put away sin. Can you so think of this as to apprehend the breadth of purpose it involves? Is not such an undertaking

beyond the grasp of your minds? But try to spell it out. Does it not occur to you that there must have been a gathering together of all kinds of sin, and a concentration of all the forces of sin at that tremendous crisis? I think you have only to look at the pictures as they are drawn by the four Evangelists to perceive the dark shadows of every species of human guilt.

Were not the vices that defile the heart of man, and the atrocities that distract society--those vile prejudices and bad passions which issue in the foulest crimes--all represented in the conspiracy to crucify Jesus of Nazareth? Tell me, if pride and infamy, jealousy and covetousness, treason and treachery, ribald mockery, and brutal cruelty, with a legion of other wicked spirits, did not make common cause against the Lord's Anointed? The mask of religion was worn by some, and the guise of patriotism was assumed by others. To what intent was this? Why, it is told in one short sentence. When He came to put away sin, then sin was up in arms directly, and counsel and clamor from all grades of society made their voices heard, and their influence felt, to put Him away.

Ah, you say, that only happened once. True, so far as the work of redemption is concerned. But how often is it repeated in the experience of men who reject the Savior? The like concurrence of all sorts and forms of sin is found in the case of every one of you who deliberately or wantonly hardens his heart against that great Sin-Bearer, that great

Sin-Destroyer, our most glorious Christ! Every evil disposition you harbor, every evil habit you indulge, every wicked practice you follow, leads, no, irresistibly drives you on to this goal--"Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him, crucify Him"--is the cry to which your heart consents, to which your life gives sanction. I do but interpret the meaning of your unbelief. It must be so. For you are bent on upholding sin while Christ is bent on putting away sin--thus you set yourselves in opposition to Him.

And it is so. For it is the ordinary testimony of every converted man. Those of us who have the best opportunity of judging can bear witness that in the repentance which accompanies faith, the sense of guilt is felt much as though all sins were rolled into one in the aggravated sin of unbelief. And it ought to be so--for our Lord Himself said, "When He (the Spirit of God) is come, He will reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on Me." Give heed, then, to this, my Hearer, whosoever you may be that now declines to yield to my Master. If ever you are born of the Spirit, you will plead guilty to this charge. Or if, God forbid, you die in your sins, the indictment framed against you, the verdict given, and the sentence passed will be according to this judgment. You will be condemned because you believed not on the Son of God. The reason why at this moment you love darkness rather than light is because your deeds are evil.

Let me remind every unconverted person here of the responsibility which presses upon him with regard to the great fact that Christ is preached to him according to the manner in which he has been revealed to put away sin. That fact must affect you for woe, if not for weal. Whatever may be its relation to those Hottentots and barbarians who have never heard the Gospel, it must affect you, because you have heard it, and the rule is that the ministry of the Cross of Christ, when addressed to

your understanding, must either prove a savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

Make no mistake about this. You never pass under the heart-searching ordeal of listening to a Gospel sermon without some moral consequence. There is some result produced. You are either blessed by it, or hardened by it. Possibly you may think it is a most proper thing to come to a place of worship, and you feel relieved by having attended. Yes, but if your conscience were awake you would understand the words of the Apostle, "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." "Turn not away from Him that speaks from Heaven." "He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trod under foot the Son of God?" "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

If I live and die knowing the Gospel, and yet rejecting it, what can I say at God's bar? What excuse can I make for myself? I cannot plead ignorance. I must confess willful hardness of heart, which went so far that I preferred to risk damnation rather than accept salvation on God's terms. I had rather perish as God's enemy, so my unbelief says, than I would submit myself and become God's friend. Oh, this is iniquity reaching to its highest altitude! I beseech you--ungodly Man, ungodly Woman--look such iniquity in the face, and think of its terrible issues!

Our text tells us that Christ has appeared once to put away sin, but remember, He is to come a second time! Unconverted Man, Woman, have you thought of that? You would not look at Christ when He came the first time, despised and rejected of men, but you shall look at Him when at His second advent--

"The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,

With rainbow wreath, and robes of storm; On cherub wings, and wings of wind, Appointed Judge of all mankind."

You said it was nothing to you the first time, and you passed by. But you will find it something to you the second time. When the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long. When the cerements of the grave are rent asunder. When the dead shall rise from land and sea. When the Great White Throne shall be set, and all nations shall be gathered before it, and the Shepherd-King shall divide them as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats--you will find, then, that from that Throne you cannot escape! The Throne of Mercy you may despise--but the Throne of Judgment you will not be able to set at nothing!

Suppose the destined hour should transpire now--and it is but a little while before it shall overtake this giddy, thoughtless world. Overleap that brief interval for a moment. Let your imaginations transport you to--

"That tremendous day Whose coming none can tell,"

although with silent, sure, and rapid steps it is approaching us now. Think that you are standing in the crowd, and the books are opened, and the eyes of fire have flashed upon you, and your life unveiled, with all your actions and their hidden springs, is being published to angels and to men--and your sentence is about to be pronounced.

No escape is possible! The rocks cannot hide you! The mountains cannot cover you! The eyes of Him who once wept will flash with lightning, and the tongue that said, "Come unto Me, you weary," shall say, "Depart, you cursed," and the Face that was once so full of pity, shall suddenly be red with holy anger as He shall say, "I know you not! Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity!" And shall that be your portion?--

"Prevent, prevent it by Your Grace; Be You, O God, my hiding place, In this the accepted hour!"

My Hearer, shall this be your portion? Shall it be the portion of any man or woman now sitting in this House of Prayer? May God avert it by His eternal mercy! But I see not how it is to be avoided except you are led to fly to Christ. And the only opportunity you may ever have is this present opportunity, for, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." May you be led by the Spirit at this moment to come to Jesus, and so shall you find eternal salvation in Him.

II. Turning now to another part of the congregation, let me spend a little time in ADDRESSING MYSELF TO THE MANY OF YOU who have believed that Jesus is the Christ, to the saving of your souls. Beloved in the Lord, our sins are pardoned! We are accepted in the Beloved. We have passed from the realm of fear into the kingdom of safety. We are no longer in the wilderness. We are come to Canaan, to Mount Zion, to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn. We hear no rumblings of Sinai's thunders, but the soft voice which speaks better things than the blood of Abel.

What shall we say as we see evidently set before us this great and unspeakable sacrifice, by which our Lord Jesus Christ put away sin? I think our first exclamation should be, "Be gone, accursed Sin, that could have needed such a Sacrifice! That could have made it necessary for the Savior thus to suffer!" Repentance is always the companion of faith. They go hand in hand. Let no man speak evil of repentance. I have been grieved within my heart when I have heard some revivalists, by innuendo at least, speak against repentance.

You will never enter Heaven without repentance. And if your faith does not lead you to hate sin, and do a great deal more than merely change your mind--as these modern fanatics say--you will find it is a faith which will never estrange you from the corruptions of the flesh, enamor

you of the holiness of the Spirit, and conduct you to the Heaven of God's Presence. You must hate sin. You must perceive the evil of it. And you must turn from it and live, according to the instincts of the Divine Life communicated, as well as according to the ordinances of the Divine Rule made known unto you--or else you are no child of God.

But where is true repentance to be had? It is never experienced by a man, except as he, by God's Grace, receives the cleansing, sanctifying power of the Savior's precious blood. To repent of sin because I know it has ruined me, or it will ruin me, is legal repentance, and needs to be repented of. But to be able to sing, as one of our hymn writers expresses it--

"My sins, my sins, my Savior! Their guilt I never knew,
Till with You in the desert, I near Your passion drew. I know they are forgiven, But still their pain to me, Is all the grief and anguish They laid, my Lord, on You."

That is repentance. To hate sin because it caused the brow of Christ to be girt with the crown of thorns, and the face of Christ to be dishonored with the spittle, and the hands of Christ to be pierced with the nails--this is repentance--not because I am afraid of Hell! Not because sin brings pains and penalties with it, but because it made Jesus Christ to suffer for me such pangs unutterable.

My Brothers and Sisters, standing here by faith at the foot of the Cross, do we not feel more than ever the evil of sin? If we do not, let this be our prayer, "Lord, help me this night as I come to Your table, to feel the bitterness of my sin, which was so bitter to You. Let me see its deadly character in Your death. Let me see its shame in Your shame. Let me perceive the nakedness which it brought upon me in Your nakedness. Let me discern the misery which it would have caused me forever in Your misery. And let me now declare revenge against my sin.

And however dear any one sin may have been to me, let this be my solemn resolve, in the strength of the Holy Spirit--

"Whatever that idol is,
At once I'll tear it from its throne,
And worship only You."

Deep repentance will be a sweet help in coming to the Supper. The bitter herbs always made the Paschal lamb the sweeter, and the pensive sadness of repentance will give zest and stimulant to the faith with which we feed upon the crucified Redeemer.

Still further, Beloved, what emotions of gratitude should this Truth of God inspire in your breasts! Ought it not to fill your entire life with the fragrant incense of praise? "Your testimonies," we might well say with the Psalmist, "have I taken as a heritage forever. For they are the rejoicing of my heart." O that the flame of gratitude might kindle and glow in all your musings! O that it might find constant expression in the deep humility and the sweet gentleness of all your works and ways! Say, "What homage can I offer You, my Lord, at this good hour? Little can I render unto You for all Your benefits, but much do I owe You for Your love that passes knowledge. Your Word shall be my lamp. Your Precepts shall be my choice. Your Statutes shall be my songs. "I will delight myself in Your Commandments. All who trespass against me, I will forgive for Your sake. Your saints I will love. Your lambs I will feed. I will bear the infirmities of the weak, and not please myself. I will pray without ceasing. I will give thanks for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'So will I'--did I say? Let me rather say, 'So would I.' Though the vows of God are upon me, I have not strength of myself to perform one vow. Yet You know, for You search all hearts, and this You know, for You know all things--I sincerely desire and earnestly covet the Spirit of holiness

to consecrate myself unreservedly unto You."

There is yet another point to which I wish to have your particular attention, O you that believe in Jesus! We are told in the text that once in the end of the world Christ appeared to put away sin. Now what is your conviction upon the subject? Did He put away sin or not? I anticipate the answer of every Believer here--"Of course He did! By His one offering He put away sin forever." Beloved, why is it that some of you tonight are troubled about your sin? Now look back during the past week. Has there not been a great deal in your life that you have to mourn over? Do you live a single day in which you went to your rest contented with the review of your character or your conduct? I must acknowledge I never spent such a day, and I am afraid I never shall till I get Home to Heaven.

Sins and sorrows multiplied pollute the days to my shame and my horror. But when I come to look to Jesus Christ my Lord, and trust in Him, shall I feel dismayed on account of my sins? No! They are all forgiven! They are all forgiven! Yes, that particular sin--you know what it is--the one which has caused you so much trouble this week, is forgiven. There is no sin that you have fallen into, as a believer in Jesus, which can be laid to your charge. That bold speech of the Apostle makes a wide sweep--"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Observe, he does not say, "Any great things," but "anything"--any little things, anything, anything of any kind. Do you not know that though you have erred and strayed many times, and made yourself to be ashamed, yet still, when you come to the--

"Fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins," this Truth is sure--that "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin"?

Then every Believer here tonight is as clean in the sight of God as the

snow which falls from Heaven. Come, then, let us shake off these fears. He who knows that his debt is paid would be foolish to be troubled about the debt. And he who knows his sins are forgiven, may have, should have, ought to have, peace with God through Jesus Christ his Lord! My dear Brethren, God will help me, I hope, to live more and more in the atmosphere of peace with God. I do believe the devil often worries us when there is no cause whatever for our being troubled. Sin is always to be hateful to us. We are always to loathe it. But when washed in the precious blood of Jesus we are to endeavor to realize that through His blood we are clean, and that, with His spotless vesture on, we are holy as the Holy One.

Notwithstanding the depravity of our old Nature, and the workings of the flesh against which we strive, yet we are accepted in the Beloved. We are justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Come, then, children of God, take your harps down from the willows and tune them to a rapturous strain! Magnify the Lord your Righteousness. This is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness--Jehovah Tsidkenu. His name shall be rapturous on our lips, and glorious in our ears from this time forth even forever and ever. He has appeared to put away sin, and it is put away! Let us, then, enjoy our rest.

I want the further attention of every Believer here to another particular. Beloved, we read in this text that Jesus Christ, in order to put away sin, has made a sacrifice of Himself. When that word "sacrifice" is used with such grand significance in reference to Christ, it looks almost like a disparagement of its high import to apply it in any reference to ourselves. Yet we have the mind of the Spirit in the words of the Apostle Paul, who has said, "I beseech you, therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your

reasonable service." Ought we not, if Christ has made a sacrifice of Himself for us, to make a sacrifice of ourselves for Him?

He sacrificed Himself. I told you this morning that it was more than His wealth, more than His honor which He offered. It was HIMSELF. Every Christian should offer himself as sacrifice to Christ. They did so in the martyr age. They did so in the first young hour of the Church's enthusiasm when Apostolic zeal was fervent. But do we do so now? Talk of giving to the cause of God--why, very few of us give enough to sensibly impoverish ourselves by our giving. We are afraid of making a sacrifice of ourselves. In the service of God we generally take care not to injure ourselves by excessive exertions. Indeed, our friends are always very careful to warn us against any risk of this kind! Men in business may work as many hours as they like, and as hard as they will to get money, and very seldom does any sagacious, prudent mentor shake his head and tell the young merchant that he is laying out his strength too recklessly, and devoting his energies too vigorously in getting gain or acquiring a fortune.

Oh, no! They would rather tell him to spread all his canvas and ply every sinew, especially when wind and tide are in his favor. But the minister of God--the servant of Christ--often has that judicious advice tendered to him, "Do yourself no harm. Be sure and not work too hard." "It was never intended," they say, "that anyone should risk his health, consume his spirits, or deny himself innocent recreation with an enthusiasm that far exceeds the line of duty," as if there were such a line, or it were possible to define it. Ah, well, if the love of his Master is in him, as a constraining power, then kindling with the noble passion and laboring with a fiery zeal, he will resent such expostulations as Christ did that of Peter, when, replying to his

pitiful rebuke, "Pity yourself, Lord"--He said, "Get you behind Me, Satan! You are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of men."

We are bound to sacrifice ourselves, yielding up the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness unto God, and devoting the faculties of our renewed minds that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. O my Brothers and Sisters! I have already said that I scarcely like this word, "sacrifice," because it involves nothing more than a reasonable service. If we gave up all that we had and became beggars for Christ, it would display no such chivalrous spirit or magnanimous conduct after all! We should be gainers by the surrender.

With Christ in our hearts, the Light of Life and the Hope of Glory, we should be rich to all the intents of bliss. We cannot stoop as He stooped. We cannot be poor with such poverty as He knew, neither can we renounce such riches as He once possessed. But, at any rate, let us not be stingy in our consecration. Let us yield ourselves wholly and heartily to

Jesus Christ's work. Let us feel it to be our pleasure, our principle, our point of honor not to shrink from labor nor to shun sacrifice! Let us, rather, court labor and invite opportunities of suffering and occasions for the giving of ourselves and of our substance to His cause. He was sacrificed for us, let us be a living sacrifice unto Him.

Did you notice that word "once"? The text says He once offered Himself a sacrifice--only ONCE--once and for all. Ah, well, Brethren, we may take that word and apply it to ourselves. We can only be sacrificed for Christ once. In this world, alone, shall we have the opportunity of washing the saints' feet, of feeding the poor, of looking after the helpless and the ignorant. There is one thing for which Heaven itself

might envy the poor sons of earth--that there are works to be done here which "Perfect saints above, and holy angels cannot do."

We might almost wish ourselves back from Heaven if we could go there with any of our life's work undone. No! No. We would not seek untimely rest, if there is another soul to win. If there is another dram of bitter shame for us to drink. If there is another part of the sufferings of Christ for us to fulfill, we would wait until it is all done, and we can say, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." It is only once! It is only once! If you could only serve a friend once, you would like to do it well that time. You have only one life on earth, and oh, how short that may be! Waste not an hour! Spend none of its moments in wantonness or in selfishness, but let the whole of your strength, during the few years of your pilgrimage, be given up to your Lord. Once was He a Sacrifice--only once--but that once thoroughly. Let us imitate Him.

This morning I also dwelt upon that word "appeared." Christ was not ashamed to appear as a Sacrifice for us in public, albeit deep dishonor was heaped upon His holy name. And, therefore, I say to Believers here, let them not be ashamed to be publicly made sacrifices for Christ, though some should wag their heads in rude contempt, and others shoot out the tongue with bitter jibes at them. Do I speak to any timid Believer here, any Nicodemus who has slunk away, and will not dare to come with an open profession to the Table of the Lord tonight? O my dear Friend, Christ did not treat you so badly, and at the last, you hope, He will own your name among His followers. Do you own His name now?

"Oh," you say, "God's Church is so imperfect." And what are you? Are you better than they? Are you afraid that you would not live up to your profession. Don't you know there is One who says, "My strength is

sufficient for you"? The path of duty is the path of safety. Be not ashamed to own your Lord, I pray you. Oh, it will come to pass one day that the highest honor will be given to that man who never blushed to stand at the pillory, side by side with Christ--when He, who was once crucified, shall be crowned with glory and honor--and they shall be crowned with Him who were willing to bear the shame with Him! "These are they," says He, "who were with Me in My humiliation in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Stand back, angels! Make way, seraphs! You have never been spit upon and scoffed at for Me as these have been. They shall be honored as princes of the Blood. They shall sit upon My Throne, even as I have overcome, and am sitting down upon My Father's Throne." O Knights of the Cross, let shame never trouble you! Or if the crimson blush should rise to your face, be ashamed that you are ashamed! Be jealous of yourselves that you are not more bold to confess your Master's name! Christ once appeared and put away sin by making a sacrifice of Himself--let us take care, then, constantly, to emulate the example of Him whom we cannot too worthily admire.

I shall not detain you longer. I have said too little unless God has blessed it. I have said enough if He shall apply it. I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, when you come to the Table, do not be satisfied with these outward signs. Think it nothing to eat the bread or to drink the wine. In fact, it is less than nothing and vanity, unless there is something more. The great thing is for that bread to help you to think of the broken Body of your Lord, and for that cup to show you the agonies of His soul when He was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Come here with the subject of this morning's sermon fresh upon your hearts.

Come with the thoughts which it suggests this evening burning for

fuller expressions in your lives. And as you sit before the Lord in the fellowship of His people, let this be your desire, "Lord, as You have given Yourself for me, let me know experimentally all the blessings which Your blood has purchased. Bring me unto communion with Yourself. Permit me to put my fingers into the prints of the nails, and thrust my hand into Your side tonight. Give me the cleansing, the purification, the sanctification which Your blood can bestow, and help me from this day to be Yours, and Yours alone, till death shall take me to dwell with You where You are, and till Your second coming shall make me to be like You, when I shall see You as You are. May God bless these words to us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Our King, Our Joy

(No. 963)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 27, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let the children of Zion bejoyful in their King." Psalm 149:2.

THE book of Psalms ends in a sacred tumult of joyous praise. There is praise all through it, though sometimes it is but a still small voice. But when you reach the concluding Psalms you hear thunders of praise! There God is praised with the sound of the trumpet and upon the high sounding cymbals. All the force and the energy of sacred minstrelsy are laid under contribution that Jehovah may be extolled. Let the Book of Psalms stand as an image of the Christian's life. If we began with the blessing of the man who delights in the Law of the Lord. If we proceeded to obtain the blessing of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. If our soul learned to pant for her God as the hart for the water brooks. And if we went onwards till we sang, "He crowns me with loving kindness and tender mercies," let us not pause now, but advance to the hallelujahs of the closing pages of our book of life!

He who ends this life with praising God will begin the next life with the same delightful employment! As our latter days are nearer the land of Light, let them be fuller of song. Let us begin below the music which shall be prolonged through eternity. Like the birds, let us welcome the break of day, which faith in the close of life gladly perceives to be very near. I shall, this morning, call upon the veterans of Christ's army to be first in the fulfillment of the duties

of praise. I shall pray that those who have tasted longest that God is gracious, may utter the loudest notes of thanksgiving, so that the younger pilgrims may learn from them, and be strengthened and comforted by their joyful example.

At the same time I shall pray that all of us, whether we have been long in the Divine life or not, being citizens of the new Jerusalem, and subjects of the Prince Immanuel, may this day be joyful in our King. The time of the singing of birds is, I trust, come! Awake and sing, you who have dwelt in darkness.

I. I shall invite you to consider our text, first, by the remark that the joy to which we are here exhorted is PECULIAR TO A CERTAIN PEOPLE. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." No others can be joyful in Him, no others have any reason for being so. Those who are not the children of Zion have reason for dismay at the very thought of God's supremacy. "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice," is a song for saints, but remember there is another side of it-- "the Lord reigns let the people tremble!" "He is angry with the wicked every day." The glory of the Son of God can be no comfort to those who are despisers of Him, for when He shall come, as come He will, it will be with no silver scepter in His hand for them--with no reward of Grace prepared for them--but He will come with a rod of iron to break them in pieces as potters' vessels.

Those who are not the children of Zion cannot, therefore, rejoice in their King. He is no King to them in the sweet and gentle sense in which He is the Prince of Peace to us. His rule extends over them, but its greatest display will be one of justice, not of mercy. He will exhibit His power in executing the righteous sentence of God upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And, seeing they have rejected Him, He will be the object of their deepest dread. Children of Zion,

you are the people who should be joyful in our King, and there are sacred principles within you which make it certain that you will be! The first is your loyalty. The children of Zion are loyal to their King. They delight to think that "the Lord reigns." They are glad that He has set His King upon the holy hill of Zion. Why, if it could be put to the vote among Believers today who should be the Head of the Church, there would be but One chosen. If we were asked who should rule over us, what other name should even be mentioned in our presence but the name of Jesus our Lord and King? We are so loyal to Him that I am persuaded, though we justly fear we should deny Him if left by His Grace, yet if supported by His Spirit the most bitter pangs of torture, and the most dreadful terrors of death could not separate us from His love.

If we are His followers, come fair, come foul, come life, come death--none shall ever divide us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Prove your loyalty this day--rejoice in His Sovereign will even though He may be exercising it in a manner against which the flesh rebels. We will receive evil from His hand as thankfully as good, for that which appears evil we are well assured is good if He ordains it!

Loyal subjects do not only submit to those decrees of their Monarch which are pleasing in themselves, but they give in their unwavering adhesion to the entire administration of their King. His throne and dynasty to them are paramount, and in his actions they take delight. In the case of our great Lord and King the rule is absolute--what He commands we desire to do. What He wills we seek to will. We acquiesce in His determinations, and hope even to rejoice in the most painful of His Providences.

Christian loyalty finds music in the name, and Heaven in the Person of

King Jesus. None can extol Him too much. Our hearts are never surfeited with His glories, our ears never weary of hearing His praises. His rule is so good, so kind, so loving, that no other people ever had such a monarch! Every day we elect Him afresh in our heart's warmest love, and we sing again and again--

"Crown Him, crown Him King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Zion's citizens are something more than loyal to the Monarch, they are attached to His Person. Apart from the Throne and Crown of the Lord Jesus we feel a devout attachment to His very Person. As the Son of God, we worship Him and adore Him, and our heart reverently confides in Him.

As bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, our Brother, our Redeemer who has purchased us with His own heart's blood, He is the Beloved of our souls. He has engrossed our warmest love, and none can rival Him. The savor of His name has oftentimes revived our fainting spirits, and a sense of His Presence has filled us with the new wine of holy exultation. He is in Himself All in All to us. His offices, His works, His honors--all these are as garments perfumed with myrrh and aloes--but He Himself is Fragrance itself!

Nothing grieves us so much as when any speak slightly of Him. Nothing so excites our indignation as when men do despite to His Cross and Crown. Our greatest joy is to hear of saved souls in whom He is glorified, to see Him revealing His healing power among the sons of men, and the sons of men acknowledging that healing power by yielding themselves to His service. We show that we are attached to the Person of our King by the joy we feel when our minds consider Him. We are joyful in Him because our love finds her center of rest, and her circle of motion in Him and Him alone.

When the children of Zion rejoice in their King, this indicates that

they sink themselves in Him. What matters it to the true child of God what becomes of himself so long as his King is great and glorious, so long as the Lord Jesus rides forth prosperously in His chariot of salvation, and His name is hallowed and His kingdom comes? The citizen of Zion is content to be poor, to be unknown, or to be obscure if the Prince of the House of David is but glorified.

In the olden times the children of Zion often courted death for their Lord's sake. They scorned to fly when the accusers sought them out. They came before the world's judgment seat and there confessed that if it were a crime to worship the Christ, they gloried in confessing that they worshipped Him--and if the price of faithfulness to Him were death-- they asked to die that they might show how truly they loved Him!

Shall we, who owe as much to our Lord as they, be less willing to deny ourselves and to resist even unto blood, striving against sin? May the Spirit dwell in us so richly that for us to live may be Christ and not self at all! May we count all things but loss for Christ's sake! May we never pine at the hardness of our lot, or the extremity of our grief, if we are bearing hardness for Jesus' sake. But rather may we rejoice that we are counted worthy to take part in such a cause. Loyalty, attachment to His Person, and self-abnegation all make us joyful in our King, and there must be added to these an unbroken confidence in Him. If we suspect our King's fidelity, or His wisdom, or His power. If we begin to think that He has made mistakes in His government, or that He has omitted us in the administration of His liberality, we shall not be able to rejoice in Him. But if we feel that Heaven and earth may pass away, but never can His love be changed. That the ordinances of Heaven might be broken, but never could His purposes and decrees fall to the ground. If we can feel that all is well and all safe in His hand, that

the government is upon His shoulders, and therefore never suffers damage. That He, with the key of the House of David opening so that no man shuts, and shutting so that no man opens, rules wisely and well in all matters--if we

can feel this, we shall be devoutly joyful in our King! Put these various feelings towards our Lord Jesus together, and you have so many fountains of rejoicing in Him.

If we add to all this an intense admiration for the great King in Jeshurun, we shall not fail to rejoice. The thought of His coming down from Heaven to suffer for our sins, the remembrance of His life of holiness, and His substitutionary death of sorrow--these, I say--have won our hearts to deepest admiration. Surely there was never such a one as He, no love could be compared with His for a moment. He is to us "the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely," to whom all the beauties of earth are ugliness, compared with whom the brightness of the morning is but darkness. If we do, indeed, so admire Him, that we see nothing else to admire except what first of all came from Him, then joining this with confidence, and attachment, and self-denial, and loyalty, we must, we shall be joyful in our King!

I wish we had not only these Divine Graces, which like many rare spices well blended make up a holy anointing oil, but that they were so in us and did so abound that the savor of them filled all the chambers of the Church till all the household of faith were transported with delight in their King. In proportion as we become what we should be, as children of Zion, by the work of Grace within us--in that proportion we must inevitably and necessarily be a joyful people rejoicing in our King.

An old Negro who had long known and loved his Master, and who with little knowledge yet had grown much in Grace, was noted for being always happy, and therefore someone asked him why it was he always

rejoiced. He said, "Because I always rejoice in God." "Well," said one, "but suppose your master should beat you?" "If God suffers me to be beaten I will thank Him." "But suppose you have no food given you." "If I have meat I will thank Him, if I have no meat I will thank Him. If I live I will thank Him, if I die I will thank Him. But I will always thank Him, for He is always a good God and deserves to be thanked."

May we get to just that state of heart, until the excellence of our King shall be our most prominent thought, and the joy of having such a King shall outweigh every other emotion! This will be sure evidence that we are of the chosen race. By this shall we discern our pedigree and citizenship. If we are joyful in our King we are the seed which the Lord has blessed.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY HAS A MOST PROPER OBJECT. We are to be joyful in our King. And it is most fitting that we should be so. There is nothing unreasonable in the exhortation. There is no more legitimate subject for joy in the universe. First, it should be a subject of intense joy to us to be ruled by Him. His Law is perfect, His government is gentle, His yoke is easy, His burden is light. If we were ruled by another we might soon find cause for complaint. Yes, and it might reach such a point that it would be our highest duty to rebel, and cast off the tyrant.

When we were in bondage to sin, we did well to shake off the yoke of the spiritual Pharaoh. Why should the freeborn seed of Israel be slaves to tyrant lusts? To serve Jesus is to be perfectly free. No command of Christ is an imposition upon our rights, or a curtailment of our joys. We are freest when we are most obedient to Him. Whatever Christ bids us to do is for our profit as well as for His glory. If we are Christians, indeed, we do not desire to escape our Lord's dominion, but we ask that He may more completely subject us to His delightful sway.

We would have our judgment controlled by His teaching, our affections enamored of His Person, our will subservient, no, acquiescent to His desires, and our whole selves in every thought, and word, and deed, molded by His hands. We would be to Him what the wax is to the seal. When He overcomes our raging passions, and controls our emotions and thoughts, then are we joyful in our King. Not merely as a Savior but as a King we delight in Him. We rejoice in Him, also, not only as King over us, but as Lord of All. It is always a subject for congratulation to the true Believer that Christ's kingdom extends over all men, over all angels, over all devils--that it has pleased the Father to commit to Him all power in Heaven and in earth.

We are joyful to think that not an angel bows in the courts of Heaven who would refuse to perform the will of Jesus our Lord, and not a devil howls and bites his iron bonds in the nethermost Hell who can effectually resist the purpose of the Crucified. No powers--physical, moral, or spiritual--predominate over Christ or are apart from His sway. We are joyful in our King because of His dominion, which has no end. He is the Almighty Savior, and we will bless and praise His name--

"Blessing, honor, glory, might, Are the Conqueror's native right;
Thrones and powers before Him fall;
Lamb of God, and Lord of all!" We rejoice, too, in the power of our King and in the various displays of it. We are very weak and feeble--without Him we can do nothing. Sometimes we are much discouraged when the Gospel makes slow progress, but it is delightful to the last degree to fall back upon the thought that it might subdue the whole world tomorrow if Jesus willed it--for all power is in His hands. He can do great wonders yet, and that, too, when it seems as if the age of wonders were over. The Lord of Pentecost is mighty still to save. His arm is not shortened. Awake, O Lord, and let the arm of Your

strength be made bare. Are You not the One who cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?

The enemy knows the power of Jesus' name, and though Christ may put up His sword for awhile, it is ours with importunity to cry, "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty," for He is most mighty, still. If He should once take His bow of might and shoot forth the arrows of conviction among His foes, the battle would soon be turned, and the victory would be unto the banners of His Church. The time comes when we shall see far greater things than our eyes have yet beheld--the future is His with glory--

"Kings shall fall down before Him,
And gold and incense bring;
All nations shall adore Him,
His praise all people sing--
For He shall ha ve dominion
Over river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion,
Or dove's light wing can soar." We rejoice, then, in all the triumphs He has achieved, and all the power that He has in reserve for future conquests.

And, Brethren, do we not, this day, delight in our King's present glory, and in the glory yet to be revealed? That He rules me is delightful! That He rules all worlds is also inspiriting. That He has power to execute His righteous will is also joyous. But oh, to think of His Glory! O you whose hearts have followed Him through the streets of Jerusalem in all His shame! O you who have stood with weeping eyes at Calvary's foot and seen Him there in death in all its bitter pangs, let your hearts be joyful this day when you remember that He has done with the Cross and the crown of thorns! Behold Him in His Father's courts!

These dim, bleared eyes of yours cannot as yet steadily gaze upon Him face to face, but let your faith behold Him.

Like the sun in the firmament His glory flames forth! Angels and principalities, and powers are lost in the blaze of His brightness.

Hear their hymns! They are all for Him. Behold them as they bow. They bow before the Lamb once slain. Unto Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore, the song of cherubim and seraphim ascends. And yonder white-robed ones, once like yourselves wrestling hard with temptation, now conquerors! What music have they but the music which they bring to Him? All harps praise and all hearts adore the King in the midst of Zion! Blessed be His name! O that I had permission to bow so near to Him as to kiss His feet!

Would God I might but steal into the lowest seat among the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, and but for a moment gaze upon that God-like face which was stained with spittle for my sake! I would ask no higher joy than to look upon that Person once despised and rejected on my account, but now adored of angels and admired of all the saints! You, you suffering Saints, are in your shame, but think little of it, for He is in His glory. You are in your suffering, but what matters since He is in His triumph? Children of Zion, enter into this joy, and this day be joyful in your King!

I might thus enlarge upon the Divine Object of our joy, but I will not, except to say well may we, who are the children of Zion, be joyful in our King, because of all that our King has done for us. Is it a fair city in which we dwell, in the Church of God? He built it! Every stone is His quarrying, the architecture of every pinnacle is His. Nor is there anything of good within her walls which does not bear His mark, for every good gift has come from His hand.

Are we well clothed today? The robe of righteousness we wear was worked

by Him. Every ornament of our sanctifi-cation is His royal gift. Are we satisfied at the Gospel feast? Then He Himself is our Bread. Out of the storehouses of our great Solomon come forth the fine flour and the fat things full of marrow which satisfy all those that wait at His Table.

Have we a portion and a heritage? We have received it all from Him! Are we saved from the second death, are we delivered from the guilt of sin? It is all through Him!

The old poem of one of our writers sings of the "Man of Ross," and declares that every institution of the town told of his liberality and benevolence--you asked, "Who built this fountain?" or, "Who founded yonder school?" The one answer was, "The Man of Ross." So surely if you ask us concerning our privileges, possessions, hopes, and enjoyments, we trace them all to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of our salvation. He elected, ordained, redeemed, called, established and built up His Church, and to Him, our Lord and King, be praise forever and ever! O children of Zion, be joyful in

Him!

III. Thus I have spoken of the persons who rejoice, and the King in whom they rejoice. We will now remind you,

thirdly, that THIS JOY IS PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE. One is very grateful to think that there is beneath the stars

one joy which need never be suspended. Everything here below is uncertain. We build, as we fancy, for eternity, and find our fabric demolished in an hour. The brooks of earth are deceitful, but here is a river whose joyous floods no winter can freeze, no summer can dry up.

Today our reasons for disquietude are many. You are lovers of the Gospel, and if so, I know that in this age you will see much to distress you. My heart is joyous in Christ, but it is very heavy in many respects, especially concerning the precious interests of the

Truth of God and holiness.

Look around us at this time at the numerous misuses of the doctrines of the Gospel among our ministers and leading men. First one and then another--those who seemed to be pillars are shaken like reeds in the storm. A pestilence has gone forth from which few of our Churches are free. Human intellect is adored as an idol, and in its pride it changes the teaching of the Word of God, and sets up new dogmas which the Word of God utterly rejects. If these things depress our spirits, nevertheless let us be of good courage. For if we cannot be joyful in our ministers, we will be joyful in our King!

If the pulpit fails us, the Throne is ever filled by Him who is the Truth. And if we have to suspect the orthodoxy of one, and to know the heterodoxy of another--to see Judas here and Ahithophel there--nevertheless Judah still rules with God and is faithful with the saints. Our King abides, and His Truth endures to all generations. At times our heart is bowed down because of the backslidings revealed in the moral and spiritual characters of our Brethren. They did run well, what hindered them? They were foremost once, where are they now? They were burning with zeal--why are they now so lukewarm? Where has their ardor gone?

We hoped that they would be our joy and crown, but they have gone out from us because they were not of us. Moreover, we mourn that those who are truly saints do not exhibit the spirit of Christ so manifestly as we would desire. We see among them too little earnestness, too little holy jealousy. Well, if we cannot be joyful in our fellow citizens we will be joyful in our King! When our heart is ready to break because we see so much of our labor lost, and so many tempted of Satan, turning aside, we will rejoice that the honor of our exalted King is still safe and His kingdom fails not!

This is an age--I fear I must say it--of very general declension in spiritual things. Much profession of religion and little earnest contention for the faith. Much talk of charity but little zeal for the Truth. Much boast of high-toned piety but little vital godliness. Yet if the famine in the Church should grow worse and worse, till the faithful utterly fail, and rebuke and blasphemy abound, we must not cease to rejoice in the Lord!

We, ourselves, have grave cause to complain of ourselves when we examine ourselves before the Lord. Never pray we a prayer but what we would wish to have it forgiven as well as answered. Our faith is frequently so weak that we scarcely know whether to call it faith or unbelief. As for ourselves, we are a mass of flaws and infirmities. O God, we might be very heavy if we thought only of our own personal barrenness, but we will be joyful in our King! We will sing again the royal song. There are no flaws in Him, no imperfections in our Beloved, no coldness, no turning aside in Him.

Glory be to His name! My Brethren, you who are at work for the blessed Master, I know you do not always feel satisfied with your success. I am, myself, pining for greater harvests. I would I heard of more converts. I would be delighted to lose my eyes if I might but know that many found sight through Christ. I would welcome any affliction if I did but know that souls were being saved. But when we preach in vain and say, "Who has believed our report?" it is delightful to return unto our rest and feel, "Nevertheless, the pleasure of the Lord does prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul." If I cannot be joyful in my converts I will be joyful in my King!

Many of you, perhaps, are passing through deep waters in your temporal circumstances. If you cannot be joyful in your property, be joyful in your King! Perhaps your children are not turning out as you could wish.

I am sorry you should have such perplexities with those who have been the subjects of so many prayers. But if you cannot be joyful in your children, be joyful in your King! It may be you, yourself, are much afflicted in body, and you are afraid the afflic-
tion will grow more severe. Well, if your heart and flesh fail you, yet your King will not! The eternal springs are out of reach of change. How little does your joy depend upon the creature! Your bottle, like Hagar's, may be dry, but yonder is the well of water which never can fail you. There is always reason for being joyful in your King! And when you come to die, and the pulse grows faint and feeble, oh, then will be the time for you more than ever to be joyful in your King, whose Face you are soon to see in all its beauty! Whose praises are to be your eternal employ! Here, then, is a joy for all God's people, a joy that is founded in reason, grounded and bottomed in solid realities, seeing it is a joy in an immutable Christ.

Our joy is no passing meteor, but a fixed star. When the wicked have spent their penny, our treasure will be undimin-ished. Jesus, our King, never changes, and never will lose His preciousness in our esteem. His name is always sweet, His fullness is always abounding, His love is always overflowing. We have always cause, even in our worst estate, to be joyful in our King. The saints shall sing aloud upon their beds.

Let me thrust in one sentence here. I do not think it is so difficult to rejoice in our King in dark afflictions as it is to remember to rejoice in Him only in our sunniest days. Successful minister, are you rejoicing in your success? Hear Him say, "Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your name is written in Heaven." Successful merchant, happy parent--are you rejoicing in these outward comforts? Hold them loosely, for they are slippery things. Set small store by them, for they will soon melt away. Do not, like the Russian

queen, attempt to build a palace of ice. Its brilliance is too short-lived. Hold to the Well-Beloved when the way is smooth, even as you held to Him when the path was rough. As in your adversity you found all in Him, so in your prosperity see Him in it all.

IV. I will add, in the fourth place, THAT THIS JOY OF OURS, THOUGH SO PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE, HAS CERTAIN OCCASIONS FOR ITS MORE SPECIAL DISPLAY. Jordan was always full, but it overflowed at certain seasons of the year. Our lake of joy is full now, let me pull up the sluices for a minute, that the floods of bliss may leap forth. When does a nation rejoice in its king? Well, there are two or three seasons in which nations set apart holidays to celebrate royal events. The first is at the coronation. Then they hang out all the flags and streamers, and adorn the streets and houses. Then all the music sounds, and the bells ring merrily, and all the pomp of the country is displayed. So let us this day be joyful in our King, for He is crowned King in our souls.

Look back to the time when first you crowned Him in your hearts--that happy day when first you saw Atonement through His blood, and looked to Him and were saved. That coronation day will never be forgotten by you. It is to you the day of days, even as the night in which the children of Israel came up out of Egypt. Keep the record of that coronation day in your hearts. "I was forgiven, I was accepted of Him." He stretched out His silver scepter and said, "I have pardoned your iniquity," and because of this I called Him "My Lord, my God, my King." My heart shall rejoice in Him whom again, today, she crowns King of my body, soul, and spirit.

Another day of joy with nations is the day of the royal marriage. Did I not see you climb to the very chimney tops, crowd your windows, and line your streets when but the other day a prince brought home his

spouse from afar? And should it not make our souls rejoice within us when we hear that Christ has married His Church to Himself, and taken us to be His spouse in bonds of love? Last Sunday morning's doctrine, I hope, has not gone from your souls--"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit," and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart it is to feel that you are one with Jesus--by vital, indissoluble union--one with Him.

Keep up the recollection of your Immanuel's marriage in your souls, for it is your highest glory. Be faithful to your solemn marriage Covenant. Forget your kindred and your father's house--so shall the King greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord--and worship Him with joy this day. People rejoice in their king, too, when he makes peace. We had rejoicings for peace some years ago, and right glad we were to hear that the treaty of peace was signed. Jesus our King is our peace. Peace with an angry God. Peace for our torturing conscience. Christ has made and signed and brought peace in--yes, He Himself is our Peace.

Then people rejoice in their king's victories. They hear that the royal arms have been victorious in battle. Then they make high holiday. In the olden times we read of the conduit of Cheapside running with wine instead of water on the event of some astounding victory of the English king over the French. O my Soul, when you remember Christ's victory over sin, death, and Hell, let your ordinary emotions which are but as water turn to generous wine of joy and thankfulness and consecration. All hail! Great Lord of Heaven and earth. Long live our King!

Take your timbrel, Miriam, and join in the song, O Israel! For the right hand of the Lord has done wonderful things! This is known in all the earth. He has led captivity captive, and ascended up on high! Rejoice, you angels, sound all your music, you spirits, who triumph with Him. Crown Him! Crown Him King of kings, and Lord of lords!

Sometimes I have heard, and you older men remember an instance right well, that a nation rejoices when a king keeps his jubilee. If he has been king for a long unbroken period, then will they rejoice in him. But our King keeps many a jubilee. He has the dew of His youth, and yet He is the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth were of old even from everlasting. He is the ancient King of Zion. Our great Melchisedek, without beginning of days and without end of years!

Praise His name forever and ever! There is a rejoicing in the nation, too, when the king holds his receptions, when he has reception days, when he displays his majesty to his friends, and when he rides forth in splendor. I hope it is such a day as this with many of us at this time.

May you sing this morning in your hearts--

"The King Himself comes near,
And feasts His saints today.
Here we may sit and see Him here,
And love, and praise, and pray.
One day amidst the place
Where my dear God has been,
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."

This afternoon may the King show Himself to you through the lattices, revealing Himself to you in your meditations and private prayers. In your work for Him in the school may you see His glory. May He hold His reception today, and you be presented to Him in love as the attendants of His court, feeling yourselves to be accepted in the Beloved, and partakers of His joy. So you see, though our rejoicing in our King is one perpetual festival, yet we have our high days when the light of the sun is as the light of seven days.

V. And now, to close. This being joyful in our King IS A JOY WHICH IS

SURE TO HAVE PRACTICAL RESULTS. As time fails me, I will be but very brief on this point, and tell you an Eastern story. An Eastern merchant of great wealth employed a skillful workman in certain works of Oriental skill and elegance. His workman, by some means, had gradually sunk deeper and deeper in debt. Through extravagance, or loss, or many other causes, he had first fallen into a little debt, and then had borrowed, and loans and usurious interest had heaped up the amount till it was beyond hope that he should discharge it.

The man grew daily more and more depressed, and as he sank in spirit be was smitten with sickness, and the skill he once showed in his master's service began to decline. Each product of his hand revealed less art and cunning. The hand of his art was paralyzed. Meanwhile his creditor became more exacting, and at last threatened to sell the poor man's children as slaves, according to the Law of the land, unless the debt was paid. This weighed more heavily upon the poor man's soul, and he worked less industriously and with decreasing skill.

At last the merchant enquired of the steward of the workroom. "Ah," said he, "was there ever a more cunning workman and he worked most dexterously. How is it that I see now no masterpieces come from him? His fabrics are few and in the market they are lightly esteemed. Our name suffers in the bazaar. Rival traders excel me in my works." "My lord," said the steward, "he is daily of a sorrowful countenance and forgets to eat bread. He keeps a long and bitter fast, for he is drowned in debt to a cruel creditor, and his soul pines like the heath of the desert. And therefore his hands are slow as that of an herdsman, and his eyes as dull as that of the owl in the sunlight. Beauty has forgotten him, and art has fled from him. He declines like one sick unto death."

"Send for him, bring him here," said his lord. And he brought him to

his chamber, "What ails you, Ali? What clouds your eyes, and chains your hands? You are not unto me as before. You were skillful as Bezalel who worked for Moses, but now you are no better than the baseborn son of an infidel mother. Is it that you are deep in debt? Behold your discharge, your debt is paid! What do you think? Will not your cunning return to your right hand?" That servant worked with a diligence never before seen! In the joy of his heart his mind became as nimble as the gazelle on the plain, and his work as precious as the pearls of the Indian gulf. The merchant found himself abundantly rewarded in his servant's skill and toil, for having thus set his heart at rest.

Shall not it be thus with every ransomed soul to whom Jesus has brought the news of salvation? You cannot serve our King after the best sort with a downcast mind. You cannot give yourself entirely to His service unless you have the oil of joy to anoint your head! The wheels of the chariot are heavy till joy is harnessed to the car. The Lord Jesus has forgiven all your debt and given Himself to be your Joy forever, and should you not, from now on, be first in His service, manifesting an enthusiasm in His cause, a force, a power, an elasticity, an energy which otherwise you could never have felt? Joyous spirits, see to it that you keep your joy bright and clear, for you will honor your King the more.

He wants not slaves to grace His Throne--rejoicing hearts are His delight. You who are sad, pray that the King will lift up the light of His countenance upon you, so that your drooping hands and feeble knees may be strengthened. Do not let us be sad, for the Bridegroom is with us! Let us not tremble for the ark of the Lord--Dagon will fall before it yet. Though the hosts of the Lord may appear to melt away and their numbers lessen, when they are few enough to be trusted with victory, the Lord will grant it. God will reserve unto Himself the handful of

men that lap, and these shall go forth and cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," until the enemies of the Lord destroy one another.

Let not the enemy laugh us to scorn because of our trembling. But let us charge home with renewed vigor, for Truth, for God, for Christ, for the Cross, for the everlasting decrees of a sovereign God, for the majesty of the Holy Spirit who will effect those decrees in the heart of men! Let us set up our banners anew and advance to the fight! Let us strengthen ourselves in God this day and go forth to the conflict, which if it is severe, will, nevertheless most certainly yield all the more glorious a victory to Him who is our King, and to us who loyally serve Him, even as we rejoice in Him this day!

O that all were subjects of this King! Would God that those who are not reconciled to our Almighty Monarch would seek His face this morning! He will give them mercy through Jesus the Savior--may they seek it and find it. Amen.

Chapter 56

The Essence Of The Gospel

(No. 964)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 4, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He that believes on Him is not condemned. But he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

I MAY have preached from this text before. I may have done so several times. If I have not, I ought to have. It is the whole Bible in miniature. We may say of it so many words, so many volumes, for every single syllable here is charged to the full with meaning. We may read it, and re-read it, and continue still to read it day and night, yet ever find some fresh instruction in it. It is the essence of the Gospel. The good news in brief. When our Lord Jesus Christ shall come a second time, before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.

That will not, however, be the first time in which the Presence of the Lord Jesus has acted as a separator. It is always so wherever He comes. Men are as one body in their fallen condition--all alike estranged from God until He appears. But His coming finds out the chosen and calls them apart, and on the other hand, the unbelievers are discovered. Two camps are formed out of the once-mingled multitude. Each goes to each, each one after its own kind finds its fellows, and between the two fellowships there is a deep gulf which divides them as clearly as light is distinct from the darkness, or death is divided from life.

Other distinctions sink into insignificance in the Presence of Jesus--riches or wealth, learning or ignorance, power or weakness--are matters of too small account to divide mankind in the Presence of the great Discerner of spirits. Only these two characters--Believers and unbelievers--stand out in clear relief. As it is in our text, so is it as a matter of fact in the entire universe--the only two really vital distinctions for time and for eternity are just these--Believers and Unbelievers, receivers of Christ and rejecters of Him.

Furthermore, as today the Presence of Christ divides the masses, and gathers men into assorted companies, so also does that Presence ensure a present judgment. It is written that He shall say to them on His right hand, "Come, you blessed," and to those on His left, "Depart, you cursed." And even so at this moment His Presence, with equal certainty, produces a judging. For here in the text we find Believers not condemned, or in other words, acquitted, and we find Unbelievers condemned already.

The, "Come, you blessed," is anticipated in the non-condemnation, and the, "Depart, you cursed," is, as it were, already heard in the verdict, "Condemned already." I charge you, therefore, this morning, while the Word is preached in your hearing, to remember that a clear and all-important division will be worked while this sermon is being delivered. This day the Son of David holds His Throne, and in this house He sits in judgment. In the preaching of the Gospel at this moment His majestic voice divides the sinners from the saints, and if sensitive to His Presence, we shall either tremble or rejoice.

God grant that while this division shall go on, as it must go on, for He will be this day a savor of death unto death or a life unto life to every one of our souls, we may all be found among Believers, and none of us shut out as condemned already by being Unbelievers.

I. I shall ask you, this morning, first, to CONSIDER TO WHICH OF THE TWO CLASSES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT WE BELONG. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Have we a share in that character? Let us see to it. What is meant by believing on Him, or rather in Him, for the word "eis" is rather in Him than on Him. If I mistake not, the word, "believes in Him," means a great deal more than most of us have seen in it.

I think I see many shades of believing. There are some who believe concerning Christ, that is to say, they believe that He is the Messiah and is the Savior of men. Many accept this for a Truth of God because their fathers did so, and it is to them a matter of unquestioned tradition. They are born in what is commonly thought to be a Christian country, and therefore have they taken up with the Christian faith, and theoretically and notionally they believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Redeemer of the world. They would not hesitate to stand up and say, "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was begotten of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried," and so on.

But remember, you may believe all that is orthodox concerning the Lord Jesus, and yet it will be no token that you are justified in Him. No one may dare to say that a belief in the Athanasian creed will ensure us of salvation. If you reject His Deity, if you deny His Atonement, such errors will be conclusive evidence that you are not a believer in Him, because you are not a believer of the Truth of God concerning Him. Therefore you must take your place among unbelievers, who are condemned already.

But on the other hand, if you hold the Scriptural Truth, and believe accurately concerning the Lord Jesus, yet if you go no further, your mere faith about Him, or concerning Him, will not bring you salvation.

To know Christ is of no avail, unless it can be said, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you."

It is a step further when we have come to believing Him. This is sometimes mentioned in Scripture--believing Him. "I know whom I have believed." Believing concerning Him that He is God's Christ, His Anointed, His Sent One, His Messiah, we therefore should, as a matter of course, accept whatever He says as being true. And if with our hearts we do this, I think we are saved. But we may think we do this and notionally may give our assent to His teaching, and yet, notwithstanding, we may not have attained unto His salvation. We may still be condemned Unbelievers, though we may think, and say, and profess that we believe Him.

Frequently in Scripture there is another form of the believing which clusters about the Greek word, "epi," believing upon Him. Our translators seem to have placed the word "on" here as though it were in our text, but it is hardly so in the Greek. There is a difference between believing on Him and believing in Him. To believe on Jesus is, indeed, a saving faith, for He that believes on Him shall not be confounded. To believe on Him is, as it were, to lean upon Him, to receive Him as God has set Him forth, and, in consequence, to make Him the foundation of our hope.

Believing concerning Him, and believing Him, we then come to repose upon Him, and to make Him our confidence. We believe that He can save us, we trust in Him to save us, and this is the essence of saving faith--to believe upon the appointed Redeemer. But in this particular case our text speaks of believing in Him, and this is something more than believing upon Him. Every man who really believes upon Christ will before long come to believe in Him. But there is a growth--believing in Him is more than believing upon Him.

How is that? If I thoroughly believe in a man, what is the result of it? Is he an advocate, and am I immersed in law? Then I trust my case to him--I leave the affair in his hands without fear--for I believe in my advocate. Very good. So far that may be believing upon him. But now he gives me directions and rules of action. If I believe in him I shall certainly follow those rules to the letter, being fully convinced that they will lead me to a right issue. I commit the matter practically as well as theoretically to the man whom I have chosen to represent me, and I do so cheerfully, for I believe in him.

I am like a man on board a vessel--I believe in him who is the captain. What then? If he bids me do this, or that, or the other, I may hear someone call his orders foolish, but I believe in him, and I do, at once, whatever he bids me. His bidding may appear absurd to one who has no faith in him, but to me it is wise and right. Suppose there should be raised up at this juncture for poor unhappy France, a man of high military genius, a man who shall be capable with such material as may come to hand to meet the terrible foe, and to disperse the cloud which now hangs over the capital city.

If the people shall believe in the man, what then? Why they will surrender the direction of affairs to him. They will implicitly follow his lead. Does he command a sortie, does he bid the army advance? They believe in him, and the sortie is made, and the troops advance gallantly to the conflict. Should he counsel delay, and the avoidance of a great battle, those who believe in him will entrench themselves, or retire before the foe.

If they are absolutely sure in their hearts that he is the man who guarantees victory, they will be certain to obey his orders. He will be their oracle, their dictator, and that most joyfully on their parts. So that to believe in our Lord means this--that I believe Him to be the

Son of God, and believe all other Truths of God concerning Him. That I also believe whatever He says to be the Truth of God. In other words, I believe Him. Yet more than this, I cast my soul upon His atoning merits that He may save it, and so believe upon Him.

And furthermore, having so done I give myself up entirely to the Savior's holy guidance. I believe Him to be infallible as the director of my spirit. I feel a union with Him. I come to be in Him--His cause is my cause, my cause His cause--I believe in Him. Now this is the Man of whom the text says, "He that believes in Him is not condemned," and the question I put this morning to myself and to you is, Have we believed in Jesus? Do we really take Him to be our All in All? Do we consent that He should guide and lead us till He brings us to eternal felicity?

The connection of our text will help us to form a judgment as to whether we are, indeed, Believers in Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, have you realized, by a true exercise of faith, what is meant by the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the present chapter? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." As the serpent-bitten Israelite looked to the bronze serpent when it was uplifted, have you, in the same way, looked to Jesus and found healing through looking to Him?

By this you may judge yourselves. Have you been healed of the wounds of sin and quickened into a new and heavenly life? Have you in very deed made the crucified Savior your soul's resting place? In the verses which follow the text, you find such words as these, "He that does the truth comes to the light." Do you, my Brethren, as the result of having trusted in Christ come to the light? Is it your desire to know God's Truth, God's will, God's Law, God's Word? Are you seeking after the

light, and are you desirous that the works worked in you should be seen to be the fruit of God's own Spirit? By this, also, can you judge yourself?

It is vain to say, "I trust in Christ," if you have never looked to Him with that same childlike look with which the Israelite looked to the bronze serpent--and equally vain for you to profess to be a believer in Him, unless you desire the light. You may be in partial darkness still, as doubtless you are, but are you seeking more light, seeking God, seeking Truth, seeking right? By this shall you know whether the Father has begotten you unto a new birth, whether you are to a certainty a new man, no longer a light-shunner but a light-seeker. No longer, because your deeds are evil, seeking to conceal yourself from the convicting Word of God, but because your deeds are truthful, seeking to receive more light, that your works may be made manifest to your own conscience as being truly worked of God in your soul.

The consideration which I proposed just now has to be taken up with regard to the second class. Are we Unbelievers? It is to be feared that there are some such here. If that is so, it may be of some service to them to know where they are, and what they are. "He that believes not is condemned already." Some of you here are very inconsistent, because though you believe not in Christ Jesus, that is to say, do not trust your souls with Him, nor give yourselves up obediently to serve Him, yet you believe concerning Him that He is the Christ of God.

And if He were here today and spoke to you, you would believe His Words, though I cannot say you would so believe them as to act upon them. It is so very strange that you should believe Him to be the Son of God and yet should not trust Him! You believe what He speaks is true, and after He has warned you of the wrath to come you still sit down in stolid indifference and do not seek the salvation which He

provides. Instead of looking to the bronze serpent, you act as the Israelites would have done had they sought out another remedy.

You have not believed in Christ, but if you have any belief that you need a Savior, I suppose your own common reason makes you seek one. You are evidently, therefore, seeking another salvation than that which God provides. You are refusing what God has ordained, that you may find something of your own. There is but one Savior--that Savior this day you will not trust in--you are refusing Him to your own destruction.

You are this day shutting your eyes to the one only Light, and though you have some desire towards light at times, yet you love darkness rather than light, and still continue as you were--dark, dark, dark--for you do not like to be reproved.

You cannot bear that the Gospel should come too cuttingly home to touch you in your conscience and rebuke you for your sins. To this day you remain an Unbeliever and a lover of the darkness. Search, I pray you, and look! While this heart which now addresses you will pity you, I trust God's heart may pity you, too, and may you yet escape out of the condition of the Unbeliever, and yet be numbered with the Believers in Christ.

Thus much on our first point, which I leave to your earnest self-examination, hoping that it may not be treated lightly.

II. Now, secondly, and for a very short time, let us CONSIDER THE CONDITION OF THE BELIEVER. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." What a joyful sentence is this! Provided you have ascertained that you do believe in Jesus, turn this sweet word over and over in your souls, my Brethren. Is it not delightful to think that you have it from God's own mouth by inspiration, and to note that the inspiration is of a remarkable kind, for you have it not only by the Spirit of God, but you have from Jesus

Christ Himself the sweet assurance that you are not condemned!

What joy, what peace this Word should speak unto your soul! Let me show you for a minute how the Believer escapes condemnation. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." One reason is because he does not offer himself for judgment. He that believes in Christ does not present himself to be tried. He says, "No, my Lord, I have no argument with You, I plead guilty, I confess the condemnation. There is no need of trial. You are justified when You speak, and clear when You condemn."

There sits the Judge, and the prisoner should stand opposite to him, for they are two parties. But behold, in this case the prisoner leaves the place, declines a trial, falls at the Judge's feet, acknowledges that the sentence, if carried out, would be just, and pleads guilty.

Having done this the Believer sees that the sentence which he acknowledges and confesses to be right has been already laid upon his Surety--and in that Surety he believes. What does he believe about Him? Why, that God, that He might magnify His Justice and His Grace, was in Christ Jesus! And that the Son of God did hang upon the Cross, and bleed and die, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

The Believer confesses the justice of the sentence, and therefore is at one with God. He comes to the Light, and his deeds are reproved, and he accepts the reproof, and acknowledges it to be true.

Then he looks to the Cross, and he says, "This very sentence to which I do subscribe with my own hands that it is just, has been laid upon my ever glorious and blessed Surety, the Only Begotten of the Father, and He has been punished instead of me. And I am therefore free, since Christ died as my ransom." This is the way in which the Believer comes not to be condemned--he accepts the condemnation, and then sees it laid upon his Surety! This brings him peace. The Justice of God would have disturbed his mind. He sees that Justice satisfied, and he declares in

his own heart that if God is satisfied, he is satisfied.

If God's Justice is honored, then conscience feels that all is well.

And now what happens? Why this believer in Christ, not being condemned, seeks the light--from this day forward he desires more and more to walk in the light of knowledge, the light of the Divine Presence, the light of Divine holiness. O my Brethren, there was a time when our souls inclined after sin! But now, though we sin, we mourn over it, and because we mourn it we have evidence that "it is no longer I," as the Apostle says, "but sin that dwells in me."

The very inmost I, the true, most real ego within my soul now desires holiness. If we could be as we would, we would be pure as God is pure. Our heart hungers and thirsts after righteousness. We come to the Light, and now, having believed, we are in such a condition that our deeds, though discovered, do not bring us shame and confusion. In that very Light our works are made manifest that they are worked in God--and we rejoice that God is working in us by His Spirit holy desires, emotions, and actions--which shall go on increasing until we shall be perfectly delivered from sin.

This is the condition of the man who believes in Christ! It is a very happy condition, a very hopeful condition, a very heavenly condition--who would not desire to be in it? It all hinges upon the believing, for with the believing in Jesus there comes the new birth. With the new birth comes the desire after Light. With the desire after Light there arises a progress towards it--and a manifestation of the secret working of the Holy Spirit within the soul. Happy Believers, thrice happy in what you are as well as in what you shall be!

III. And now, thirdly, and here comes our most solemn work--may God's Holy Spirit help us in it. CONSIDER THE CONDITION OF THE UNBELIEVER.

"He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed

on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Observe the fact, itself, which is here stated! "He that believes not is condemned already." Let me enlarge upon this very solemn Truth of God.

First, the Unbeliever offers himself for judgment. "He has not believed on the name"--what is the name? It is the Savior, Jesus. He who believes on Jesus, the Savior, confesses that he needs saving and declines to stand on the footing of Law. But he who refuses the Savior does in effect say, "I do not require a Savior, I am willing to stand my trial by the Law." I tell you, every soul that declines a Savior, does, in effect, ask to be judged by the Law. There stands the alternative--are you guilty--will you confess it? If so, accept the Savior.

But if, on the other hand, you say, "I will not accept the Savior," in the bottom of your soul there lies the presumptuous conceit, "I can stand the judgment. I do not want pardon and Grace." Then, Sir, if you ask for judgment you shall

have it! And behold the result of it--God declares you to be condemned already. You have not believed, you have asked for judgment, you shall have it, but it is your ruin.

The Unbeliever, himself, gives personal evidence to his own condemnation. Do you enquire how he does this? The text points us to his not believing. Is yonder person a condemned or not condemned man? Ask him what he thinks of Christ. If he replies honestly, he says, "I do not accept God's testimony about Jesus Christ. I do not receive Jesus as my Savior." Either he claims that he does not need a Savior or else he does not feel that Jesus is the Savior he needs. He rejects the testimony of God concerning Christ--is not that enough to condemn a man? If a man, in the very presence of the judge, committed theft or murder, he would condemn himself. But is it not a still higher offense

than this, in the very Presence of God to do despite to His Son by practically declaring His work and blood to have been unnecessary? Is it not the height of daring that a soul should stand in the Presence of the God of Mercy and hear Him say in His Word, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and that the soul should reply, "I have nothing to do with the Lamb of God"? What further witness do we want with regard to your enmity to God? He that will not believe in Christ would murder God if He could. His not believing in Christ is virtually to make God a liar.

Still further, he that believes not in Christ gives evidence against himself, for he rejects "the name." Observe the text, "He has not believed on the name." As I had already hinted, that name is Jesus, the Savior. The man says, "I will not have the Savior." Many of you have not said so much in words, but you practically say it. For you do not believe in the Savior. You remain at this moment Saviorless--out of Christ--without hope, without pardon, without mercy. And you have continued to do so under the preaching of the Gospel now for many years.

What more evidence do you want? If a man will reject God, even as a Savior, there must be a dreadful venom in his heart against God. If God appoints Christ to be King, and I reject Him, that rejection shows that I dislike God. But when He appoints Him to be a Savior, the errand being one entirely of mercy and goodness, if I reject Him I must in my soul have an amazing depth of enmity against God. By this clear proof I condemn myself!

My Brothers and Sisters, if you look at the text again you will see that he who believes not, rejects a most exalted Person. For he has not believed on the name "of the only begotten Son of God." What a word is that, "On the Jesus, who is God's only begotten Son." I wish I had

language suitable for the utterance of a thought which presses down my very spirit, as it did last Sunday evening. That God should send a Savior, and for a Savior the Only Begotten, the Lord of Heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that is made, and that He should come with testimony of love, the love of God to sinners, and seal that testimony with His blood. And that men should refuse to believe in Him!

It is the most monstrous iniquity that could be imagined! I cannot see that Satan, himself, with all his blasphemy, has ever gone this length. He was never placed where he could reject, as a Savior, the only begotten Son of God. When men rejected Moses they perished without mercy, for he was sent of God. But when a man despises the Only Begotten, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, we may well say--"Call no witnesses against the man, rake up none of the details of his past life, this is quite evidence enough."

If he has not believed on such a One as this, he is condemned already. There is no need of a trial. Unbelief itself is the vilest of all treasons--out of his own mouth the sinner is condemned. Do you not see, O Sinner, how the matter stands? The infinite Lord of Mercy, that you might not perish, has devised a wondrous way of salvation which has astonished cherubim and seraphim, and made Heaven ring with song, and this you utterly reject! The plan so stupendous in conception is briefly this--that the Creator should suffer that the created rebel might escape--that the Infinite should come into this world and be put to shame that the guilty might be clear! And all you are asked to do, all that is demanded of you is that you submit to be saved by this plan--that you do but trust in the Jesus who is Divine, who is also Man--do but trust Him to save you.!

Will you not? Oh, will you not? Sirs, will you spurn almighty love? Can

you turn away from boundless mercy? Then what shall I say of you, but just what the text says--you condemn yourselves, you are "condemned already"? You must be infinitely wicked! You must be enormously, monstrously, diabolically at enmity with God, or else, surely, a benefit so precious you would not slight! Surely a plan of mercy so adapted to your condition you could not have the impertinence to reject! "Condemned already because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." Solemn words! Hear them and tremble! From the verses following the text we gather that you Unbelievers go on to give further evidence against yourselves, for every man who rejects Christ, the true Light, always goes on to reject other forms of the Light of God's Word, God's Spirit, and his conscience. He loves darkness rather than light, and comes not to the Light lest his deeds should be reproved. You quench the Spirit, I know you do, if you reject the Savior. You turn a deaf ear to your conscience, you do violence to your own judgment. The Truth of God you do not wish to learn. It is not possible that you can be a candid seeker after light if you refuse to receive Him who is Truth's central Sun.

Your further rejection of Light is confirmatory evidence that you are condemned already though your not believing is, in itself, evidence enough. And now solemnly, and in the name of Him that lives, and was dead, and is alive forever-more, speaking for that Christ who, though once He was slain, now sits at the right hand of God, I ask those who are under this second character to listen to these simple but weighty words of admonition. Consider, I pray you, O Unbeliever, that the condemnation which is pronounced upon you already is no matter of form. Our judges sometimes read out sentences of death upon a certain order of criminals. And the sentence is recorded though it is never intended that the sentence shall be executed.

But from God's bar there never proceeds a sentence that is meant needlessly to alarm. You are condemned already, and as surely as you live, and as surely as God lives, He will not let His Word remain a dead letter. That sentence shall be no idle threat! In your proper person you shall be made to know what the power of His wrath is. "Who knows the power of your anger?" says the Psalmist. They only know it who feel it, and you will feel it before long, for the sentence will assuredly be fulfilled.

The Lord has power at this or any moment to fulfill His sentence. What power have you to resist it? Who is there that can help you to withstand Him? You are utterly in His hands, you cannot escape from His prison. If you climbed up to Heaven He is there. If you dove to Hell He is there. The whole universe is but one great prison for an enemy of God. You cannot escape Him--neither can you resist Him. If your bones were granite and your heart were steel, His fires would melt down your spirit. Against Him you can no more stand than the chaff against the fire or the dust against the whirlwind. O that you would feel this and desist from your insane rebellion!

Remember, there is no promise given to you that He will not execute the sentence of His wrath this very day. You have no warrant either from His Word or from His angels to assure you that God has suspended the sentence even for the next hour. You are living by His forbearance, spared by the Divine Sovereignty. Some rave against Sovereignty, but in this case it is not Justice that spares you, it is the mere will of God that for awhile keeps you out of Hell. You tell me that nothing endangers your life at this moment--how do you know that?

The arrows of death often fly imperceptibly. I have stood in congregations preaching on two occasions when the unseen darts of death struck one of my hearers, so that one died on each occasion while

listening to the Word of the Gospel. God needs no miracle to put His sentence into execution at this moment. He need not disturb the natural order of affairs for you to die instantly. And if He so willed it, your soul's destruction would, without the slightest effort on His part, take place at this very moment, even where you are.

Remember with deep concern that God is angry with you right now. This statement is no invention of mine--it is written by the pen of Inspiration that, "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turns not He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow, and made it ready." God is more angry with some of you than He is with some in Hell. Are you startled by the assertion? "It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for you." The sins you have already committed are greater than those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the anger is in proportion to the guilt.

An angry God holds you over the gulf of Hell. Justice demands that you fall into it--and it is nothing but His merciful will that keeps you out of it. He has but to will it and you who are condemned already would be forever where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched, before next time the clock shall tick.

Up to this time, let me remind you, you have done nothing to appease the Divine wrath. You have gone on sinning. Or if you tell me you have reformed, that you have thought of these things, that you have prayed--do you think that such things will remove the Divine wrath? The Lord has told you that the only way of salvation is to believe in Jesus, but you try to find another. Do you think that such conduct will please Him, that such a procedure will make Him less angry with you? You insult His Son when you suppose that you can save yourself by your tears and prayers--will this turn away the Lord's anger?

When you imagine that your Church attendance and Chapel attendance will save you, you set a low estimate upon what Jesus did. You do despite to the Cross as long as you remain Unbelievers. You say, "We are doing what we can." You are doing nothing, I tell you, that can appease the anger of God! You are rather, by these very actions of yours, which you think to be good, setting up in opposition to Him an Antichrist upon which He will look with abhorrence. He says He will save by Christ, and no way else. And so long as you seek another way, you, as it were, spit into the very face of the Only Begotten by the insolence of your self-righteousness.

Meanwhile, let me remind you that God's wrath, though it comes not on you yet, is like a stream that is dammed up. Every moment it gathers force--if it bursts not the dyke--yet every hour is swelling. Each day and each moment of each day in which you remain an Unbeliever, you are treasuring up wrath against the Day of Wrath when the measure of your iniquity is full. How earnestly would I persuade you to escape from condemnation! If you dream that to be condemned of God is a trifle, undeceive your souls, for those who have passed where the sentence is executed, could they come back to you, need not tell the tale of woe, the very sight of them would convince you that to be lost is an awful thing!

On their heads must fall the wrath of God, who, by softening down the punishment, become the means of hardening sinners in their sins. It is not within the power of thought to conceive what God's wrath is. No language, even though it should make both ears tingle, can ever fully express it. I am not one of those who would so delude your poor souls, O Unbelievers, as to make you think it a light thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

O turn, turn, turn! Why will you die? Why will you reject Him whom you

have such reasons to receive? Concerning whom His very Person is the best argument for love? The Christ of God must be worthy of our hearts' affections--His very errand on earth, as it seems to me, would, if we were not mad, ensure our confidence. For He came to SAVE, to PARDON, to pass by the sin of the past! Oh, why do you stand out against Him, and in this way pull down upon your heads the wrath of an angry God?

Let me point out to you the way to escape. The only way of escape for any man or woman here is to believe in Jesus Christ. "I am praying about it," says one. My text says nothing of the sort. "I will think of it." Think of it? You will think yourself into Hell before long!

Immediate faith is what I, as God's ambassador, demand of you in the name of the Christ of God--immediate, instantaneous faith in Jesus!

Behold the emblem of the Gospel minister and of his message! Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness upon the great central standard in the very midst of the camp where men were dying all around him. They are bitten with the serpent, and what has Moses to declare to them as a remedy? He bids them look and live!

Some of them will think of it, some of them will consider it, others of them will pray about it. But he has no commission to console any of these--his one command is an immediate look--he has no promise to those who will not look. Even thus is Jesus lifted up among you. There is life in a look, life now, life at this moment. I cannot guarantee you that the serpent's bite shall not be your eternal ruin if you linger for a single hour. The Prophet's one word is, "Look now." Today, God in mercy sends to everyone in this house this message--"The times of your ignorance God winked at," but now commands all men everywhere to repent. He sends His Gospel message, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

That message I cannot be certain will ever come to you again. "Now is

the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Every moment you do not believe, you are sinning against God by that unbelief. I cannot, therefore, tolerate that you should wait a moment. Jesus is God! He became Man! He died! He lives and bids you trust Him--promising that you shall live. Trust Him now, then! He is worthy of your confidence. Sin not against Him. Sin not against your own souls by rejecting Him. Remember what it was which Moses lifted up--it was a serpent--the image of that same serpent which bit them.

Were they healed by looking to that which poisoned them? Assuredly they were. What is that which has poisoned you, Sinner? It is the curse of sin. What is that which I hold up today in the Gospel? It is Christ made a curse for us! He takes upon Himself our sin! Though in Him was no sin, yet He was made sin for us--and if you trust Him to be the sin-offering for you, to suffer for you, to bleed for you--and so trust in Him as to take Him from now on as your standard, resolving to follow the uplifted Crucified One throughout life, even until He brings you to God Himself in Heaven, you are NOT condemned! But if Jesus is lifted up and you refuse to believe, on your heads is your guilt, I say, with trembling solemnity, on your own heads is your guilt! Those words of mine, O Unbelievers, will be swift witnesses against you at the Last Great Day. As truly as ever Christ came to Jerusalem, so truly does He come to you, this morning, in the preaching of the Word. I am a poor feeble man, but I speak to you as best I can. Nevertheless, if you refuse my word it is not me you reject, that were nothing--you reject the Gospel which I preach to you. In the name of Him that made Heaven and earth, that made you, and holds you in life, against whom you have sinned, these terms of mercy are presented to you--will you have them?

This Grace is brought home to you, and I am bid to press it upon you,

even as the Word says, to "compel them to come in." If you reject the only begotten Son of God there must still abide against you this solemn sentence, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed." Did I hear you say, "I hope I shall believe." Sir, I have nothing to do with that, and I have no hope for you. "I hope I shall repent one day." I despair of you while you talk so. It is TODAY that God separates this congregation into the two parts, the Believer and the Unbeliever.

Today He blesses the Believer and testifies that he is not condemned! Today He curses the Unbeliever and tells him he is condemned already. My business is not with tomorrows, nor can I promise that the white flag of mercy will be hung out tomorrow. Today the Cross is the banner of Grace. Look to it and live! It is the ladder which reaches to Heaven. The crucified Savior is the gate of salvation. O that you would receive Him! May God grant you may, and He shall be glorified by you in this life and in the world to come. God bless you. Amen.

Purging Out the Leaven

(No. 965)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 11, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that you may be a newlump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness. But with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

"WHAT God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Evermore in Scripture the Doctrines of Grace are married to the precepts of holiness. Where faith leads the way, the virtues follow in a goodly train. The roots of holiness and happiness are the same, and in some respects they are but two words for the same thing. There have been persons who have thought it impossible that holiness should come out of the preaching of salvation by faith. If you tell men that "there is life in a look at the Crucified One," will they not conclude that cleanness of life is unnecessary? If you preach salvation by Grace through faith, and not at all by the works of the Law, will they not draw the inference that they need not be obedient to Christ, but may live as they wish?

To this the best answer is found in the godly, honest, and sober lives of the men who are most zealous for the Gospel of the Grace of God. On the other hand, there have been others of Antinomian spirit who have dared to say that because they are saved, and Christ has finished His

work for them so that nothing is left undone by way of merit, therefore, from now on they may act as they please, seeing that they are not under Law, but under Grace. Our reply is that the faith which saves is not an unproductive faith, but is always a faith which produces good works and abounds in holiness.

Salvation in sin is not possible, it always must be salvation from sin. As well speak of liberty while yet the irons are upon a man's wrists, or boast of healing while the disease waxes worse and worse, or glory in victory when the army is on the point of surrendering, as to dream of salvation in Christ while the Sinner continues to give full swing to his evil passions. Grace and holiness are as inseparable as light and heat in the sun. True faith in Jesus in every case leads to an abhorrence of every false way and to a perseverance in the paths of holiness even unto the end.

The Apostle Paul, while he was showing the Corinthians how wrong they were to tolerate an incestuous person in their midst, compared the spirit of uncleanness to an evil leaven. Then the leaven suggested to him the Passover, and turning aside for a moment, he applied the type of the paschal feast so as to make his argument yet more convincing. He would urge purity upon them by every conceivable reason, and his keen eyes saw an argument in the celebration of the Passover.

In using this type he furnishes me with another proof of the fact that hard by any Scripture where you find the safety of the Believer guaranteed, you are sure to see necessary holiness set side by side with it. Here you have at the Passover a favored people safe beneath the sprinkled blood, safe in that dire hour when the destroying angel's sword was unsheathed--but you find that people busily engaged in purging out the defiling leaven from their houses--they were not saved by purging out the leaven, but were preserved by the sprinkled blood.

They were obedient to the Divine precept, and diligently put away the corrupt and forbidden thing. The purity of the house from leaven went side by side with its safety by the blood.

We shall, this morning, first, consider the happy condition of Believers. Next, the holy duty commended to them, running side by side with their privilege. And thirdly, we shall show how their happiness and holiness, their holiness and happiness, act and re-act upon each other.

I. We have set forth to us THE HAPPY CONDITION OF ALL TRUE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast." The habitual normal state of a Christian is that of one keeping a feast in perfect security. We are to be, as a rule, like the Israelites who stood at the table of the Passover festival, with loins girt, and staves in their hands, expectant of a joyful deliverance. Observe how the Apostle puts it--take his words one by one--"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

"Our Passover," that by which God's wrath makes a transition, and passes over us who deserve its full vengeance. It passed upon the Lamb of God, and therefore it passes over us. Christ is sacrificed or slain, His life is taken, for He gave Himself for us. His life and blood, yes, His true Self, He yielded up for us. The word for "us" implies substitution. Christ is sacrificed for or instead of us. We should never think of saying that Paul was sacrificed for us, though it is true Paul did lay down his life for the Church of God to promote the interests of the faithful, and in a certain sense, since his exertions handed down the Gospel, he died even for us.

But we use the term so generally and so correctly in the sense of substitution, that we should not think of applying it to any but our

Lord, who alone, in the fullest sense was sacrificed for us. He is the Lamb of our Passover, sacrificed on our behalf, that we might not be sacrificed--roasted in the fire of suffering that we might go free. It is by the process of substitution that, according to abundant Scriptures, believing sinners are passed over in judgment and so escape eternal condemnation. "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." No one can doubt this doctrine who believes the Word of the Lord by the Prophet Isaiah in his fifty-third chapter, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many. For He shall bear their iniquities." "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Our great joy is that the Sacrifice through which we are passed over is already slain. No new victim is expected or required. The Sacrifice by which we are delivered is complete. Accursed be all those who say that there is offered to God continually a sacrifice in the "mass" by which the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is rendered complete. He has said, "It is finished," and they are liars before God who say otherwise. "This Man,

after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."

Do you think I am severe in my speech? I say no other than Paul said, "If any man preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed." All that was wanted to atone for our sin, all that was required to vindicate the Law of God is already offered. There is nothing left to be presented by so-called "priests" on earth or to be made up by the penances and payments of their dupes. Our Passover is sacrificed. Let others offer what they will, ours is the Lamb once slain, and there remains no more sacrifice for sin.

This completeness of sacrifice, indeed, is the main part of the festival which the Christian should perpetually keep. If there were anything yet to be done--if the substitutionary sacrifice were imperfect, how could we celebrate the feast? Anxiety would destroy all enjoyment. "It is finished," is the joyous peal which rings us into the celestial banquet of present peace! The fact that we are complete in Him--perfect in Christ Jesus--is our soul's deepest delight.

Our sacrifice is slain--"therefore," says the Apostle--and it is a natural inference from it--"let us keep the feast." By which I understand this--Jesus Christ, the Paschal Lamb, not only was offered as a sacrifice towards God, but He has become a festival towards ourselves. In Him we have communion with God, and joy and peace through believing. We are to keep the feast by feeding upon Christ. The paschal lamb was not slain to be looked at, to be laid by in store, or merely made the subject of conversation. But it was slain to be fed upon.

So, Christian, it is your daily business to feed upon Christ Jesus, whose flesh is meat, indeed, and whose blood is drink, indeed. Jesus is the Food on which your faith must be nourished. And what rich nourishment He is! God over all, blessed forever, has redeemed us. The

Word made flesh, who dwelt among us, has been sacrificed for us. My soul, what more could be required? What more can you desire, or can the Almighty One demand? A sacrifice Divine, a perfect Man in union with the eternal God, dies for you. What more is needed to make your faith firm and unmoved? Come and feed yourself on this Bread which came down from Heaven!

The infinite love of the great Sacrifice, the amazing wisdom of it, the transcendent merit of it, the abounding fullness of the blessings which it secures--let your souls consider these things, and feed upon them till they are satisfied with favor and full of the goodness of the Lord. Here is a festival the viands of which never can be exhausted, and from which the guests need never depart. Remember that at the paschal supper the whole of the lamb was intended to be eaten. And even thus, O Believer, the whole of Christ you are to feed upon.

No part of Christ is denied you, neither His humiliation nor His Glory, His kingship nor His priesthood, His Godhead nor His Manhood. All this has He given to you and for you, and you are now to nourish your soul by meditating upon Him. Forget not, moreover, that a feast is not only for nourishment--it is for something more--for joy, for exhilaration.

Let us, in this sense also, keep a lifelong feast. The Christian is not only to take the doctrines which concern Christ to build up his soul with them as the body is built up with food, but he may draw from them the wine of joy and the new wine of delight. It is meet that we rejoice in Christ Jesus. He is the bliss of the saints. Is it not a joy unspeakable and full of glory, that my sin will never be laid to my charge if I am a Believer?

My sin has been laid at Jesus' door, and He has put it all away so that if it is searched for it shall not be found! Is it not an intense delight to believe that Jesus has so effectually put away sin that no

destroying angel can touch one of His saints? There being no condemnation, there can be no punishment for us either in this world or in that which is to come. We are as safe as Israel when the door was sprinkled with the blood. And more, being justified, we rise to a higher position--we are adopted into the family of God, and if children, then heirs. What a vista of Glory opens before our eyes at the mention of that word, heirs of God!

All things are ours, because Christ our Passover has been slain for us. My Brethren, do not let your religion merely keep you calm and quiet--look for bursts of joy. "Praise Him upon the cymbals, praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals." Surely there should be an excitement of delight created by Truths of God so grand, by blessings so inestimable as those of which we are partakers! Let us not treat our religion as merely an ordinary meal for our souls, but as a holy banquet of wine wherein our souls may be exceedingly glad!

When the Jews came together at the Passover, we find that they were accustomed to sing. They did not close the paschal supper without chanting some portions of the great "Hallel," which consisted of those Psalms at the end of the Book, dedicated to the praise of God. Let us keep the feast in the same way, nourishing our souls with Christ's sacrifice, making our hearts glad by reflecting upon the blessing which this has brought us, and never forgetting to magnify Jehovah, the Father, the Giver of Christ, the Founder of the Covenant, our God in Christ Jesus. Let your praises never cease!

You remember what I started with--that when the Apostle says, "let us keep the feast," having drawn that exhortation as an inference from the fact that the Passover is killed, he does not mean, "let us sometimes keep the feast," but let us always keep it. Our Passover is perpetual. It has no times and seasons, it is lifelong. Salute your God each

morning with your hymn of praise, you redeemed ones! Let not the sun go down without another hymn of thanksgiving. Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him!

Ceaseless as your mercies let His praises be! O for the life of Heaven on earth, to be always praising God! Our Sacrifice is slain, therefore let us keep this feast of daily adoration and hourly thankfulness to Him who passed us by in mercy when He might have smote us in wrath. At the Passover the devout Jew was accustomed to teach his family the meaning of the feast. The children said, "What do you mean by this ordinance?" And then the father explained to them how they came out of Egypt, saying, "With a high hand and an outstretched arm Jehovah brought us forth. And on the night when He smote the first-born of Egypt, He smote not us, for the lamb was slaughtered, and when the Lord saw the blood upon the door He passed over us."

Let it be a part of our continual festival--and I do not know a more delightful duty--to tell others what our Redeeming Lord has done! Too many of you need to be stirred up to this pleasant duty. When you once break through those wicked, cowardly habits--for I cannot help thinking them so in many of you--which lock your months and prevent your living Jesus praise, you will find it sweet to tell to your children and kinfolk the story of the Atoning Sacrifice. While blessing them, you will obtain a double blessing in your own souls, and if it should please the Holy Spirit to bless your teaching to the salvation of your fellow men, you will be happy, indeed.

Do not suppose that I am exhorting you to keep the feast when you come to the Lord's Supper. I do not refer to that emblematic feast at all. I refer to our daily lifelong fellowship with Jesus. "Christ our Sacrifice is slain for us, therefore let us keep the feast." The inference is of continuous force. When is Jesus

slain? Is He not slain at this hour? Was not His sacrifice completed upon Calvary's bloody tree? Therefore let us keep the feast always, for the Lamb is always slain. Our keeping of the feast is not a matter for times and seasons--festivals and holidays--it is always our position. O you who go with your heads bowed down like bulrushes, and yet are the Lord's true people, I would gladly put my hand on your shoulders and say, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast."

Why should we lie in the dungeon when liberty is ours? "Alas," says a downcast one, "I have so many corruptions." I know you have, my dear Brother. We will talk about that directly, but "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast." "But I have so many troubles and I am so very poor." So were many of the Israelites, but when they had slain the Passover they kept the feast. So, notwithstanding all these things which make you sorrow, you must feast, for "our Passover is sacrificed."

"All my cares," says one. What business has a Believer with cares? Is it not written, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, He will sustain you. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved"? You cannot keep a feast while care, like a shrew, hovers above the table. But let us, like Abram, drive away the birds of prey, and keep the feast. "Ah, but I am thinking about the past, my old sins still haunt me." What? After Christ your Passover is slain? Surely the past is blotted out and forgiven. "Still," says one, "my mind is heavy, my harp is on the willows." Will not a sight of Calvary relieve you? Jesus Christ was made a curse for you that you might not be regarded any longer as accursed. Will not this make you lift up the note of thanksgiving? Certainly it ought!

It should be always feast time with God's servants, since Christ their

Passover is slain. "But I have nothing to rejoice in," says one, "except my religion." What more do you want? What was there brought on the table at that paschal supper by way of good cheer, except the paschal lamb? I grant you there was something else upon the table, but what was it? Bitter herbs. Surely those were not an addition to the joy? It was not sharp sauce such as we ordinarily use, but bitter, pungent herbs. These did not please the palate, yet they kept the feast upon the lamb, which was all they needed.

So you may bring the bitter herbs of your deep repentance that your sin made it necessary that the Lamb of God should die. But all the feast is in Him, and all the world can contribute nothing to that feast but bitter herbs. If you had all the world, and derived comfort from it for a time, in the end it would become bitter as wormwood. Bitter herbs all things beneath the sky must be--only Jesus is the true Feast. My Soul, rejoice in the Lord always, for you have always reason to triumph, since Jesus Christ is slain!

II. Side by side with the picture of the lifelong feast, we find A HOLY DUTY COMMENDED to us. "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven." "Let us keep the feast. Not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Leaven is used in Scripture, we believe in every case--there is only one case in which the question could possibly be raised--as the emblem of sin. This arises partly from its sourness.

We, being ourselves leavened with evil, find leaven somewhat palatable at the first, but God, who hates all evil, puts away the type in all its stages. Sin, which for awhile may seem pleasant, will soon be nauseous, even to the sinner. But the very least degree of sin is obnoxious to God. We cannot tell how much God hates sin. With the entire intensity of His Infinite Nature He loathes it. He cannot look

upon iniquity--it is detestable to Him, the fire of His wrath will burn forever against it--because sin is infinitely loathsome to His pure and holy Nature.

He calls it leaven, then, because of its sourness. Leaven is, moreover, the offspring of a sort of corruption and tends towards further corruption. Sin is a corruption--it dissolves the very fabric of society. It dissolves the constitution of man. Wherever it gets into our nature it puts it out of order, disjoints it, destroys its excellence, and poisons its purity.

Leaven is also very spreading. No matter how great the measure of flour, the leaven will work its way. There is no saying, "To here shall you go, but no farther." A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Even thus it is with sin. When that leaven had place among angels, it brought a multitude of them down to Hell. One woman sinned, and the whole human race was leavened by her fault. One sin drops into the nature, and it becomes entirely depraved, corrupt through and through, by the leavening influence.

Now, according to the Apostle, if the leaven of evil is permitted in a Church, it will work its way through the whole of it. In the Christian Church a little false doctrine is sure to pave the way for greater departures from Truths of God, so that no one can predict the end and result of the first false teaching. You cannot say, "I will be so far unorthodox." You might as well break the dykes of Holland, and bid the sea be moderate in its encroachments.

The doctrines of the Gospel have such a close relation to one another that if you snap a link, you have broken the whole chain, and we may say of the system of Truth what is written concerning the Law, "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." The renunciation of one Truth almost necessarily leads to the giving up of another, and before a man

is half aware of it himself, he has let go the Gospel. I greatly fear that the denial of the eternity of future punishment is but one wave of an incoming sea of infidelity. Deny the awful character of sin, and the substitutionary work of Christ will soon follow.

Indeed we have living proofs of this at this day and we shall see many more before long. The new teaching eats as does a canker. It speaks fair, but in its heart there is a deadly enmity to the Gospel itself, and the sooner it is seen to be so the better for the Church of God.

The leaven of evil living, too, is equally obnoxious in the Church. Tolerated in one, it will soon be excused in another--and a lower tone of thought with regard to sin will rule the Church. The toleration of sin in the Church soon leads to the excusing of it, and that to the free indulgence of it, and to the bringing in of other sins yet more foul.

Sin is like the bale of goods which came from the east to this city in the olden time, which brought the pest in it. Probably it was but a small bale, but yet it contained in it the deaths of hundreds of the inhabitants of London. In those days one piece of rag carried the infection into a whole town. So, if you permit one sin or false doctrine in a Church knowingly and wittingly, none can tell the extent to which that evil may ultimately go. The Church, therefore, is to be purged of practical and doctrinal evil as diligently as possible. That sour and corrupting thing which God abhors must be purged out, and it is to be the business of the Christian minister, and of all his fellow helpers, to keep the Church free from it.

We will, however, view the text as relating to ourselves, and let me remark that the Apostle had in his mind's eye the custom of the Jews at the Passover. In consequence of the command that they should purge out the leaven at the Passover, the head of the household among the Jews in

the olden times, especially when they grew more strict in their ritual, would go through the whole of the house on a certain day to search for every particle of leavened bread. It was generally done in the evening with a candle, and the servants and others would accompany the good man of the house to search for every crumb.

Clothes were shaken, cupboards were emptied, drawers were opened--and if a mouse ran across the room and might be supposed to carry a crumb of bread into its hole--they trembled lest a curse should rest on the home. So strict did they become that our Savior might have rebuked them as straining at a gnat while swallowing a camel. We, however, have no need to fear excessive strictness in getting rid of sin. With as scrupulous a care as the Israelite purged out the leaven from his house we are to purge out all sin from ourselves, our conduct, and our conversation. Here is a task set before you, then, my Brethren.

Note well, we do not urge you to purge out sin in order that you may save yourselves, for Christ our Passover is slain, and our salvation is secured. But that being done, in order that we may keep the feast and unbrokenly possess the joy of salvation, we are to purge out the leaven of sin. We may suppose that the Jewish householder would very soon put away all the large loaves of leavened bread that remained in the house--just as you and I, when we were sorrowing for sin--gave up at once all those gross outward sins in which we indulged before.

Some of these have never tempted us again. Drunkenness, profanity, uncleanness--I have known men give up these sins at once, in a moment, and they appear to be delivered from their power from now on and forever. Then perhaps there were some stray crusts which the children had left. These were put away, also. So there may be certain minor sins in the judgment of the world which the Christian man, when converted, may not put away the first week. But when they are seen, he says, "I

must have done with these! Christ, my Passover, has been offered. I cannot do this wickedness. I am a child of God, more is expected of me than of others."

But the most trouble would be caused by the little crumbs of leaven. These might be hidden away in the cupboard, and perhaps it was a long time after the search began before the householder found these out. But when he did, he said, "Put them away, they must not remain." And, Beloved, many a Christian man has not found out the sinfulness of some actions for years after his conversion. I am very conscious that certain matters which I thought very lightly of years ago would greatly trouble my conscience now. As I have obtained light upon certain sins, I have, through Grace, put them away. But I expect as long as I live to find something which, viewed in a brighter light, and from a higher standing, will

be discovered to be sinful--and I desire Divine Grace to have done with it. We must not hesitate for a moment. We must not retain even a crumb of the evil leaven. We must earnestly desire to sweep it all out.

The whole house was searched. I have seen a picture in which the servant is represented as cleansing the cooking vessels in the kitchen, the housewife is searching garments and cups in the dining room and the master and his sons are opening cupboards, and chests, and diligently investigating. A Christian man may feel that he has got rid of all the leaven from his shop, he is upright and honest himself, and his system of business is just. Yet it may be there is leaven in his private house, for the children are uncorrected, the Sunday is disregarded, or the servants' souls are neglected.

Perhaps the home is right, and then there may be leaven in the bed-chamber. Your conversation with yourself and your God may be in a sad condition. Prayer may be restrained. Suppose you have purged out

the leaven of hypocrisy and are sincere--are you also free from the leaven of anger? May you not still be slow to forgive? Are you clear of the leaven of pride, or of covetousness? Every part of our nature needs searching--the heart, the judgment, the mind--all must be cleansed. Purge out the old leaven wherever it has penetrated. It must come away or else, though we are safe beneath the blood, we shall not know and enjoy our safety.

The feast cannot be kept while the old leaven is willfully left within us. I told you that the head of the household usually performed the search. Let your best powers of judgment be exercised upon yourself, my dear Brothers and Sisters. Too many exercise their understandings in criticizing others, but they do not judge themselves in the same way. Let your main and chief thought be, now that you are saved, to get rid of sin. Let the master powers of your soul be called into this purging work, and ask the Master himself to aid you. Does He not sit as a refiner to purify the sons of Levi? Search me, O God! Try me, and know my ways! Your eyes can see what mine cannot. May the great Purifier put forth from us every crumb of the old leaven of our natural corruption.

I said that a candle was used to throw a light into every corner of the house that no leaven might escape notice. Take you the candle of God's Word, the candle of His Holy Spirit. Do you say, "There is nothing wrong in me if I judge myself by my fellow men"? My Brothers and Sisters, it is a small thing to be able to say no more than this! To be approved of men is but a poor standard for a Christian. Does your own heart reproach you? Does the Word of God reproach you? To be measuring myself by my fellow men, and saying, "Compared with them I am generous to the poor, and diligent in God's service"--this is to be proud because you are taller than pigmies or fairer than blackamoors. Compare yourself with Paul, with John, with Brainerd or Rutherford--and

even that is ill advice--for what were the best disciples compared with their Master? There must be no lower standard for us than the perfection of Christ. No attainment must ever satisfy us until we are conformed to His image who is the First-Born among many Brethren. You will tell me I am holding up a high standard. I am. But then you have a great Helper, and I will show you in a moment how you may be of good cheer concerning this business.

To purge out the old leaven many sweepings of the house will be wanted. One certainly will not suffice. You must search, and search, and search on, until you get to Heaven. The motto of your life must be, "Watch, watch, watch." For, mark you, you are sure to leave some leaven, and if you leave a little it will work and spread. Sin has evermore a swelling tendency, and until the Holy Spirit has cut up the last root of sin, evil will grow up again in the heart. At the scent of water it will bud and put forth once again its shoots. Here is work for all time, enough to keep us busy till we land in eternity.

It is hinted in the text that there are forms of evil which we must peculiarly watch against, and one is malice. Is a Christian man likely to be malicious? I trust in the strong sense of that term, we have done with malice, but, alas! I have known Believers who have had a very keen sense of right, and they have been commendable, who have too much indulged the spirit deprecated here. That is to say, they have been very severe, censorious, and angry--angry with people for not being perfect. Though not perfect themselves, and though they know that if they are better than others, the Grace of God has made them so, yet they are bitter and harsh towards the imperfections of Christian people. They cherish feelings of prejudice, suspicion, and ill-will. They do not seek the improvement of the faulty, but their exposure and condemnation.

They hunt down sincere but faulty people, and denounce them--but never by any chance offer an excuse for them. In some Believers there is too much of the leaven of unkind talking. They speak to one another about the faults of their Brethren, and, in the process of gossiping, characters are injured and reputations marred. Now harsh judgments and evil speakings are to be put away from us as sour leaven.

If a man has injured me, I must forgive him. And if I find him to be faulty, I must love him till he gets better, and if I cannot make him better by ordinary love, I must love him more, even as Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He did not love her because she was without spot or wrinkle, but to get the spots and wrinkles out of her, He loved her into holiness.

Take heed, also that every form of hypocrisy be purged out, for the Apostle tells us to eat the Passover with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Do let us leave off talking beyond our experience. Let us never pray beyond what we mean. Ask God, my Brothers and Sisters, to clean us from all unreality, that nothing may be in us but true metal. There is a strong temptation among Christian ministers, and Christian men of all sorts, to seem to be a little more than they are. God save us from it. The slightest taint of hypocrisy should be abhorred by the Christian man. All ill-will and all mere seeming should be detestable to the Christian, for where these are there can be little or no communion with Jesus. The fellowship of Heaven is not enjoyed where the leaven of Hell is endured.

III. Our last point shall be touched briefly. THE HAPPINESS OF THE BELIEVER ACTS UPON HIS HOLINESS, AND HIS HOLINESS UPON HIS HAPPINESS. First of all, the happiness acts upon the holiness. We have drawn a picture of the paschal feast. Set it before you again. If I know that I

feed upon Christ day by day, who has been sacrificed for me, the happiness I feel leads me to say, "Yet it was dearly purchased, my sins slew my Savior, and therefore will I slay my sins."

Every taste you get of redeeming love makes you feel that sin is a cruel and detestable thing, and therefore you will destroy it. Sitting, as you do, within the house, and knowing that you are all safe because the blood is on the lintel outside--what next? Why, you will say, "The first-born sons of Egypt are slain, and am I preserved? What then? Why I must be God's first-born, and must belong to Him!" "You are not your own, but you are bought with a price," is the voice of the angel as he passes by the house which he must not enter to destroy. Has Christ loved me and died for me? Then I am His, and if I am His I cannot live in sin! If I am redeemed, how can I continue a slave? If I belong to Jesus I cannot serve the devil, I must be rid of sin.

Then, further, if I feel that all is safe, my mind is calm, and I am able to care about the state of my heart. The Israelite was safe within his house, he needed not to keep watch and ward outside--the sprinkled blood was his security--and therefore he had time and space to see to the interior of his abode. "Now," said the Believer, "I have nothing to do with saving myself, for my salvation is finished. Therefore I will see to my growth in Grace." He who has outdoor work done for him may well see to his indoor work, and earnestly turn his thoughts to the purging out of the old leaven.

The freedom you have from fear through the blood of Jesus gives you the peace of mind necessary for a thorough search after your sins.

Moreover, the Christian man is encouraged to put away his leaven of sin because he has the foresight of a profitable exchange. The Israelite gave up leavened bread, but he soon had angels' food in the place of it. So the Christian says, "I give up these sins. They were sweet to me

once, but now they are sour, stinking, corrupt leaven. I shall receive nobler enjoyments--fellowship with Heaven shall be my portion. I may gladly part with leaven, for I am called to eat the bread of angels, no, the Bread of God!

The Christian, too, who knows that his sin is forgiven, feels that the God who could put away his load of sin will surely help to conquer his corruptions. When I see Calvary I believe everything to be possible. If Jesus can blot out sin, His Spirit can subdue it. The holy peace created in the soul by feeding upon Christ nerves the spirit for conflict with inbred sin. We will overcome it! We will drive out the Canaanites which defile our souls! We will be pure! We will be per-fect--for greater is He that is with us than all they that are against us. So you see our happiness in many ways promotes our holiness.

I am quite sure you will not need me to enlarge upon the fact that holiness produces happiness. How quiet does the soul become when the man feels, "I have done that which was right, I have given up that which was evil." I grant you that the deep peace of the Believer arises from the sprinkled blood, but it is enjoyed by purging out the leaven. You question yourself and say, "Can I believe in Christ if I am living in sin?" and you get back the comfortable sense that Jesus is yours when you can honestly feel that you have, by the Holy Spirit, renounced your old sins. Purging out the leaven clears your evidences, and so enables you to keep the feast.

You were safe enough through the blood, but now you find happiness in a sense of security, a happiness which would have been taken from you had you fallen into sin. My Brethren, how can we expect to enjoy communion with Jesus Christ

while we indulge in sin? I am sure you will find that at the bottom our

want of fellowship with Christ arises from our want of careful walking before the Lord. I read, sometimes, holy Rutherford's letters, and say, "I wish I lived like this." Now, if I do not do so, it is either Christ's fault or mine. Can I say it is Christ's fault? I dare not! He is as willing to reveal Himself to me as to any other of His servants. It is my fault, then.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, if you do not walk in the light as Christ is in the light, it is not because He is not willing that you should walk in His Light--it is because you keep at a distance from Him, and so walk in darkness. Do you believe that the sad faces among God's servants are caused by their poverty? Some of the very poorest of saints have been the most joyful. Do you think they are caused by their sicknesses? Why, we have known persons confined to the bed of sickness twenty years who have found a very Heaven below in their chamber of languishing! What is it that makes God's people look so sad? It is the old leaven.

"Let us keep the feast," says the Apostle, but it is useless to hope to do so while we keep the leaven. Perhaps there is one thing which we know to be our duty, but we have not attended to it. That one neglect will break up our festival. "He that knows his master's will, and does it not shall be beaten with many stripes." Are these stripes to be given in the next world? I do not believe it, it is in this world that erring Believers will be beaten, and very often depression of spirit, losses and bereavements happen to a Christian because he has knowingly violated his conscience by neglecting a duty or permitting a sin.

Jesus will not commune with neglecters of His will. Jesus will have no leaven where He is. If you tolerate that which is nauseous to Him, expect not a comfortable word from Him. If you walk contrary to Him He will walk contrary to you. Can two walk together unless they are

agreed? I would with much affection press these considerations upon you, for I have pressed them upon my own heart. I fear we shall not enjoy the blessing we have had as a Church unless there is more jealousy for holiness among us. I am afraid some of us are barren of spiritual usefulness because we do not watch against sin.

O keep your conscience tender! Beware of getting it seared. It is like the pond in the winter--a very thin scale of ice is formed at first--but afterwards the whole surface becomes hard enough to bear half a town. Beware of the thin scale over your conscience! Keep your heart tender before God, ready to be moved by the faintest breath of His Spirit. Ask to be like sensitive plants, that you may shrivel up at the touch of sin--and only open out in the Presence of your Lord and Master. God grant it to you. God grant it, for Jesus' sake!

This last sentence, and I have done. There are some here who are not saved. Notice how salvation comes--not through purging out the leaven! No, that operation is to be seen to afterwards. Salvation comes because the Paschal Lamb is slain. The soul feeds on Jesus--His blood is sprinkled--and the soul is saved. Afterwards comes the purging out of sin. Dear Soul, if you would be saved, do not begin at the wrong end. Begin with the Savior's blood! Begin with Calvary's Cross! Go there as a poor sinner and look to Him! And then after that we will say, "Let us keep the feast," and we will diligently see to it, in His strength, that the leaven is put away. God bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

Chapter 58

Joseph's Bones

(No. 966)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 18, 1870,

BY C. H. SPURGEON

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel. And gave commandment concerning his bones." Hebrews 11:22.

WE cannot readily tell which action in a gracious life God may set the most store by. The Holy Spirit in this chapter selects out of good men's lives the most brilliant instances of their faith. I should hardly have expected that He would have mentioned the dying scene of Joseph's life as the most illustrious proof of his faith in God. That eventful life, perhaps the most interesting in all sacred Scripture, with the exception of One, abounds with incidents of which the Holy Spirit might have said by His servant Paul, "By faith Joseph did this and that," but none is mentioned save the closing scene. The triumph especially of his chastity under well-known and exceedingly severe temptation, might have been very properly traced to the power of his faith, but it is passed over, and the fact that he gave commandment concerning his bones is singled out as being the most illustrious proof of his faith.

Does not this tell us, dear Brothers and Sisters, that we are very poor judges of what God will most delight in? Very likely, when we least please ourselves, God is best pleased with us. That prayer over which we groaned, and thought it was not prayer, may have had more true supplication in it than another intercession of which we thought far

more highly. That sermon which made us lament in the bitterness of our soul because we thought we had delivered it so feebly, may have been, in God's sight, more precious than many a fluent discourse concerning which we congratulated ourselves.

That trial which we thought we passed through with so much impatience, may have been before God an exhibition of true patience as He looked deep down into our souls. The tests by which we try ourselves are very inaccurate. It may be when we read our own biographies in the light of eternity we shall be surprised to notice that God has highly commended what we wept over--while much that we gloried in will be cast away among the reprobate silver.

The Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart, and His glance pierces to the core. The Lord weighs the spirits. He estimates not by color, form, and glitter, but by actual weight, and therefore when He weighed up the character of Joseph He gave the preponderance to an incident wherein faith is really present in much force, but not to the superficial observer.

It may seem surprising that the charge of Joseph concerning his body should be mentioned as a notable act of faith, and not the similar charge delivered by Jacob. For did not Jacob also give commandment concerning his bones? "And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife. And there I buried Leah."

He bade them carry his body to that dear mausoleum of the family at Machpelah, where his fathers rested. Why was not that a case of faith

in Jacob as much as in Joseph? We cannot always speak positively of these things, but we think that there is a very decided difference between the two. You will notice that Jacob's wish to lie in Machpelah was by himself described as resting mainly on the grounds of natural affection.

He speaks about his relationship to Abraham, to Isaac, to Leah, and so on, and with that natural feeling which is exceedingly commendable, but which is not a work of Grace. He desires to be buried with his own kith and kin. When his soul should be gathered to his people he would have his body lie side by side with his own relatives. This wish was probably as much an outgoing of nature as an expression of Divine Grace. Of course, natural affection would have led Joseph to desire the same thing, but he does not put it on that score.

Moreover, you notice that Jacob commands his sons to do with his bones what they could readily do--they were to take him to Machpelah and bury him at once. He knew his son Joseph to be in power in Egypt. And therefore anything that was wanted for his funeral would be provided--the Egyptian court, as it proved, were ready enough to give him the most sumptuous interment. They even spent forty days in mourning for him, denoting, thereby, that he was a person held in high honor. Jacob therefore commanded nothing to be done but what could be done. There was no very remarkable exhibition of faith in commanding an immediate funeral which the filial love of Joseph would readily secure.

He takes immediate possession of his sepulcher in Canaan, and for very excellent reasons, does not ask to remain un-buried till Canaan is possessed by his descendants. Jacob seeks immediate sepulture, but Joseph postpones his interment till the Covenant promise is fulfilled.

Joseph not only wished to be buried in Machpelah, which was natural, but he would not be buried there till the land was taken possession of,

which was an exhibition of the Grace of faith. He wished his un-buried body to share with the people of God in their captivity and their return.

He was so certain that they would come out of the captivity, that he postpones his burial till that glad event, and so makes what would have been but a natural wish, a means of expressing a holy and gracious confidence in the Divine promise. It was faith in Jacob, but it was remarkable faith in Joseph. And God who looks not simply at the act, but at the motive of the act, has been pleased not to put down Jacob as an instance of dying faith in this particular matter of His Holies, but to award praise to Joseph as exhibiting in death a memorable degree of confidence in the promise.

Probably Jacob's dying faith, when exercised upon other matters, outshone his faith in connection with his burial, while in his favorite son that matter was his leading proof of faith. We shall now come to examine this incident with some little particularity, and we shall find in it valuable lessons. May the Holy Spirit write them on our hearts.

I think I see, first, in this word of Joseph on his deathbed, the power of faith. I see, secondly, the workings of faith, the forms in which this precious Grace embodies itself. And, thirdly, I see an example for our faith when we come to die.

I. I observe in the text an example OF THE POWER OF FAITH. The endurance of true faith under three remarkable modes of test. First, the power of faith over worldly prosperity. "Not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are chosen"--true enough is that word. But it was never said, "Not any great men, not any mighty are chosen." God has selected a few in places of wealth, and power, and influence who have faith in their hearts, and that in an eminent degree.

Our Lord told us that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye

of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven," but He added, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Observe, then, the difficulty which surrounded Joseph's case. And then remark how great must have been the faith which triumphed over the difficulty! Joseph's position, after he had passed through his first trials in Egypt, was a very eminent one. He possessed unbounded riches. He was the viceroy of the entire country, and Pharaoh had said to him, "Only in the throne will I be greater than you."

He was, in all respects, except in name, the absolute lord of that great nation. He could do just as he willed. He was surrounded by all the state of royalty. And when he rode in his chariot through the streets the heralds cried before him, "Bow the knee." Yet all this did not prevent Joseph's possessing faith in God, and a faith which persevered even to the end!

My dear Brethren, the trials of faith are usually those of poverty, and right gloriously does faith behave herself when she trusts in the Lord, and does good, and is fed even in the land of famine. But it is possible the ordeal of prosperity is far more severe, and it is therefore a greater triumph of faith when the rich man sets not his heart upon uncertain riches, and does not suffer the thick clay of this world to encumber his pilgrimage to Heaven. It is hard to carry a full cup with a steady hand, some spilling will usually occur. But where Divine Grace makes rich men, and men in high position of power and authority to act becomingly and graciously, then Grace is greatly glorified.

You who are rich should see your danger. But let the case of Joseph be your encouragement. God will help you, if you seek His merciful aid. There is no need that you should be worldly, there is no need that you should sink the Israelite in the Egyptian. God can keep you, even as He

kept Job, so that you shall be perfect and upright, and yet be exceedingly great in possessions. Like Joseph you may be at once richer and better than your brethren. It will be very difficult, and you will need very, very much Divine Grace, but the Lord your God will help you, and you shall learn, like Paul, how to abound. And, like Joseph of Arimathea, you shall be both a rich man and a devout disciple.

Be it remembered, too, that Joseph was not only tried by riches, but that the trial lasted throughout a long life, from almost his early days to the close of his career. I suppose that for sixty or seventy years, at least, he stood in the high position of lord-lieutenant of Egypt with all the wealth of that great people at his feet, and yet all that time he remained true in heart towards the God of his fathers. May God give you who are in elevated places the like fidelity. May you remain unshaken under the most protracted temptation.

Remember, moreover, that the society into which Joseph was cast by his position in Egypt was of the very worst kind as to spiritual religion, for the Egyptians were, to a man, idolaters. They were worshippers of all kinds of living animals and creeping things. A satirist said of them, "Oh, happy people who grow their gods in their own gardens," for they even worshipped leeks and onions--they were a most idolatrous people. And though far ahead of their neighbors in civilization, they were very low in the scale of religion. We think we see in Joseph, here and there, traces that he was damaged by Egyptian habits and customs, but still not so much as one might have expected--and in no degree so much as to make us suspect his fidelity to the one God.

There must have been a deep, sound, depth of holiness in the young man or he would never have been able to live at court, and at an idolatrous court, too, and yet preserve his integrity and his faith towards Jehovah, the God of Israel. Do not forget that during a very great part

of that time Joseph had not one single person to associate with who was of his own faith. Think what a trial that must have been to him! I have known persons very warm-hearted in religion while living with zealous Christians, and very diligent while listening to a lively ministry, who, when removed from Christian society, or compelled to sit under a cold ministry, have made a spiritual failure.

Alas, I mourn over some who, when transplanted into sterner soil, have declined so that it were hard to say whether they are trees of the Lord's right hand planting or not. Joseph was removed to a place where there was no prayer in the household, no friends, no godly teacher to speak a word with, no one who knew of Jehovah or of the Covenant made with Israel. He was all alone, alone, alone in the midst of an idolatrous people--with all the temptations of Egypt before him. He was possessed of its riches and its treasures, and tempted to live as the people lived in all manner of heathenism.

And yet, for all that, he endured as seeing Him who is invisible, and at the last he died full of confident, joyous and godly belief in the God of his fathers. Ah, this is a great triumph of faith, and I would urge any of my dear Brethren here, who really love the Lord, to seek that the work of Grace in them may be so deep, so true, so thorough, that if God should make kings of them they would not grow proud of it. If God should send them right away from Christian associations they would not forget Him. And if they were exposed to all the temptations of the world at once they would resist them all. The power of Joseph's faith was, you see, abundantly evidenced in its triumph over his worldly circumstances.

Secondly, you see here the power of his faith exhibited in its triumph over death. He says, if you turn to the last chapter of Genesis, "I die, and God will surely visit you." Or, as the text puts it, he "made

mention concerning the departing of the children of Israel." Death is a great tester of a man's sincerity and a great shaker down of bowing walls and tottering fences. Men have thought that it was all well with them--but when the swellings of Jordan have been about them, they have found matters quite otherwise.

Here we see Joseph so calm, so quiet, that he remembers the Covenant and falls back upon it, and rejoices in it. He speaks of dying as if it were only a part of living, and comparatively a small matter to him. He gives no evidence of trepidation whatever, no fear distracts him. He bears his last witness to his brothers, who gather about his bed, concerning the faithfulness of God and the Infallibility of His promise. Moreover, if I am to gather from the text that the Holy Spirit has singled out the brightest instance of faith in Joseph's whole life, it is beautiful to remark that the grand old man becomes most illustrious in his last hour.

Death did not dim, but rather brightened, the gold in his character. On his deathbed, beyond all the rest of his life, his faith, like the setting sun, gilds all around with glory. Now that heart and flesh fail him, God becomes more than ever the strength of his life, as He was soon to be his Portion forever! Is it not a grand thing for a Christian to do his very best action last, being strongest in Divine power when his own weakness is supreme? We should desire to serve God in youth, in health, in strength, with all the might we have. But it may happen to us that, like Samson, our last act may be the greatest.

Many a good man groans over his life, that having done all he can it is still unsatisfactory. But perhaps the Master may be intending to give him a crowning mercy, just at the last, and make the place of his departure to be the scene of his

most glorious victory! Then, by God's Grace, he may enter into Heaven

wearing the laurels of faith--there to cast them at the Savior's feet.

Joseph, at any rate, is a noble instance of faith's conquest over death.

Once more, here is a proof of the power of faith in laughing at improbabilities. If you will think of it, it seemed a very unlikely thing that the children of Israel should go up out of Egypt. Perhaps, at the time when Joseph died, there appeared to be no reason why they should do so. They were settled in Goshen, they had been favored with a part of the land. The wisdom of Joseph had selected the most fertile part of the Delta of the Nile as a pasture for their flocks. Why should they wish to go?

They had all the comforts earth could yield them, why should they wish to leave Egypt for the soil of Canaan, where the Canaanites would dispute every inch of the ground? Canaan was where there were few, if any, advantages over Egypt, and many disadvantages! Suppose Joseph to have seen, by prophetic foresight, as perhaps he did, that another dynasty would succeed that of the Pharaoh who had honored him, and that Israel would be oppressed? He must have felt, if he weighed probabilities, that it was unlikely to the last degree that the children of Israel, when reduced to slavery, would ever have been able to cut their way out of Egypt, to reach the promised land.

Any person qualified to judge, had he been asked as to the probable issue of a conflict between the twelve tribes and the armies of Egypt, would have replied, "Israel would be at once trod down like straw for the dunghill, and the people would remain in perpetual bondage." But Joseph's eye was fixed upon the mighty promise, "In the fourth generation, they shall come here again." He knew that when the four hundred years were passed, Abram's vision of the smoking furnace and the burning lamp would be fulfilled, and the Word would be

established--"And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Though as yet he could not know that Moses would say, "Thus says Jehovah, Let My people go," though he might not have foreseen the wonders at the Red Sea and how Pharaoh and his chariots would be swallowed up there, and, though he did not predict the wilderness and the fiery cloudy pillar, and the heavens dropping manna, yet his faith was firm that by some means the Covenant would be fulfilled. Improbabilities were nothing to him, nor impossibilities either. God has said it, and Joseph believes it.

On his dying bed, when fancy fades and strong delusion relaxes its iron grip, the true, sure faith of the man of God rose to its highest altitude, and like the evening star, shed a sweet glory over the scene. May we, my Brethren, possess the faith which will triumph over all circumstances, over the pains of death, and over every improbability that may apparently be connected with the Word of God.

II. Under our second head we are to endeavor to show YOU THE WORKINGS OF FAITH. In this case Joseph gives commandment concerning his bones. The first fruit of faith in Joseph was this--he would not be an Egyptian. He Had not been asked to be an Egyptian under the yoke--anybody might have refused that. He had not been asked to be an Egyptian of the middle class--that might have been desirable from a worldly point of view. But he had the opportunity of being an Egyptian of the highest grade. He was actually exalted to almost royal rank, and he might have become a naturalized Egyptian, and his family, also. In the Providence of God he was called upon to accept the honors and riches of a most dignified office, but still he would not be an Egyptian--even on the best of terms. His dying bed afforded him a turning point, an opportunity for testifying that he was an Israelite,

and by no means an Egyptian. He did not hesitate, his choice had never wavered. No doubt he would have had a sumptuous tomb enough in Egypt. But no, he will not be buried there, for he is not an Egyptian. In Sakhara, hard by the great pyramid of Pharaoh Apophis, stands at this day the tomb of a prince, whose name and titles are in hieroglyphic writing.

The name is "Eitsuph," and from among his many titles we choose two--"Director of the king's granaries," and the other, an Egyptian title, "Abrech." Now this last word is found in the Scriptures, and is that which is translated, "Bow the knee." (See a little book, "Stone Witnesses." Morgan & Chase). It is more than probable that this monument was prepared for Joseph, but he declined the honor. Though his resting-place would have been side by side with the pyramid of one of Mizraim's greatest monarchs, yet he would not accept the dignity, he would not be an Egyptian. This is one of the sure workings of faith in a man of wealth and rank. When God places him in circumstances where he might be a worldling of the first order, if his faith is genuine, he says, "No. I will not, even at this rate, be numbered with the world." He dreads above all things that he should be supposed to have his portion in this life. If you could put a Christian on the throne, the first fear he would have would be this--Am I to be put off with an earthly crown, and miss the heavenly diadem? Place him at court and his great question will be--How shall I show that I am not one of the citizens of this world? Surround him with broad acres, a noble mansion, and a large estate, yet he says, "I accept this thankfully from God, but oh, I would not have it if I had it on condition of being numbered with the followers of Mammon!

"Now I have obtained wealth, my daily prayer to God shall be, Lord, help me so to use my station that I may not serve this evil world with

it, but may be a father to Your poor Israel. If it comes to the choice between the reproach of Christ and the treasures of Egypt, I will take Christ's reproach, and renounce the treasure. I cannot be an Egyptian."

O rich Men and Women, make this a main point of concern--prove that you are not worldlings! You have to frequent the exchange, to visit the bank, to handle large sums of money--but be not money-grubbers, rakers up of gold! Be not covetous or grasping. Prove that though in Egypt you are not Egyptians. May this be your prayer, "May God grant I may never so live as to be mistaken for a man of this world who has his portion in this life. My portion is above. Whatever I enjoy here, Heaven is my heritage."

Notice, next, that his faith constrained him to have fellowship with the people of God. Not only does be refuse to be a worldling, but he avows himself an Israelite. You will tell me, perhaps, that he only had fellowship with them when he was dead. Yet think not too lightly of that. He gave up the funeral which Egypt would accord him that he might wait long years for his funeral to be celebrated by his own people. But I beg to remind you that it was not the first time that Joseph had shown fellowship with his Brethren. It was but the conclusion of a lifetime of communion with them. It is true he did not go down into their poverty, there was no need that he should, but he made them sharers of his wealth.

God had so ordained in Providence that Joseph should be a man of wealth, and rank, and station, and he showed his fellowship with Israel by bringing his father and brothers down into Goshen, and providing for them there, and being always ready to urge their case, and to do his best to promote their interests. Now one mark of faith in the Christian man is this--if he is poor he takes his lot with the poor people of God cheerfully--but if he is rich, he counts that he is placed in a

commanding position that he may the better help his Brethren, and he has fellowship with them by his constant kindness towards them.

If it ever were necessary to prove his true fellowship that he should give up his position altogether, he would cheerfully do it that he might be numbered with the despised people of God. Joseph, it seems to me, never blushed to own his race, and never failed at all proper times to say to the Egyptians, "I am not one of you. There is my family down in Goshen." As he knew that afterwards his family would become despised and persecuted, he said to them, "Keep my bones, so that when they degrade you they may degrade me--I am going to stay with you in all your future sorrows, for I am one of you."

True faith will make the child of God say, "I am one of God's people, my soul is joined to them in all conditions." Where they go, I will go. Where they lodge, I will lodge. Their people shall be my people, and their God my God. Where they die, will I die, and there will I be buried."

In the case of Joseph his faith led to an open avowal of his confidence in God's promise. On his deathbed he said, "I die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land." He also said, "He will bring you to the land which He promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

Faith cannot be dumb. I have known her tongue to be silent through diffidence, but at last it has been obliged to speak. And, my Brethren, why should not your faith speak, for her voice is sweet and her countenance is comely? No tongue is more sweet to Christ's ear, nor more potent over the hearts of men, than the tongue of true faith.

If your faith is real, though you may, for awhile, hide your light under a bushel, you will not always be able to do so. Before long you will be compelled to say, "I believe the Gospel of Christ, I believe the promise of God. He will keep His Covenant, and I avow myself to be

a Believer in His Truth." Joseph, having thus declared his faith, practically showed that he meant it, that it was not a matter of form, but a matter of heart. I do not know in what better way he could have shown his practical belief in the fact that God would bring the people out of Egypt, than by saying, "Keep my bones here, never bury them till you go yourselves to Canaan, having left Egypt forever, and taken possession of your Covenant country."

He who believes in God will find practical ways of proving his faith. He will avow it by an open confession, but he will also manifest it by choosing some form of service in which his faith shall be put to the test. Or if affliction is allotted to him by God, he will take it cheerfully, expecting that God will give him strength equal to the emergency. And so his faith, by God's Grace, will triumph under the trial. That faith which never proves itself by works is a faith to be dreaded. If your faith never makes you speak up for your God or serve Him, it is a bastard faith, a base-born presumption which will ruin your soul. It never came from God and will not carry you to God. But Joseph is very practical, as practical as the circumstances permitted him to be.

Moreover, notice, that having faith himself, he would encourage the faith of others. No man may be said to have real faith who is not concerned that faith may be found in the hearts of his fellow men. But, you say, "What did Joseph do to encourage the faith of others?" Why, he left his bones to be a standing sermon to the children of Israel. We read that they were embalmed and put into a coffin in Egypt, and thus they were ever in the keeping of the tribes. What did that say? Every time an Israelite thought of the bones of Joseph, he thought, "We are to go out of this country one day." Perhaps he was a man prospering in business, laying up store in Egypt.

But he would say to himself, "I shall have to part with this, Joseph's bones are to be carried up. I am not to be here forever." And then while it acted as a warning, his body would serve also as an encouragement, for when the task-masters began to afflict the people, and their tale of bricks was increased, the despondent Israelite would say, "I shall never come up out of Egypt." Oh, but others would say, "Joseph believed we should--there are his bones still unburied. He has left us the assurance of his confidence that God would, in due time, bring up His people out of this house of bondage."

It seems to me that Joseph had thought of this device as being the best thing on the whole he could do to keep the Israelites perpetually in remembrance that they were strangers and sojourners, and to encourage them in the belief that in due time they would be delivered from the house of bondage and settled in the land that flowed with milk and honey. True faith seeks to propagate herself in the hearts of others. She is earnest, eager, intense, if by any means she may scatter a handful of holy seed that may fall in good soil, and bring forth glory to God. It is a good proof of your own faith when you lay yourself out to promote the faith of others.

Note, too, that Joseph's faith made him have an eye to the spiritualities of the Covenant, Joseph had nothing earthly to gain in having his bones buried in Canaan rather than in Egypt. That can make small difference to a dying man. Naturally we like to think of being buried with our kin, but then we would choose to be buried soon after death. None of us would voluntarily desire to have his bones kept for some hundreds of years out of the ground in order that they might ultimately come into the family sepulcher.

I believe he had no eye to the mere secularities of the Covenant, but was looking to the spiritual blessings which are revealed in Jesus, the

great Seed of Abraham. This made him say, "I am no Egyptian, I am one of the seed that the Lord has chosen. I look for the coming Messiah. I have a part and a lot among the chosen people of God. I will claim that, I will claim it not only for myself, but for my sons and for my household." He had in the Providence of God, without any fault of his own, been married to an Egyptian woman. Manasseh and Ephraim, therefore, were half of Egypt, and if the father had been buried in Egypt the sons might have clung to Egypt and separated from Israel. He seems to say, "No, my Children, you are not Egyptians. You are like your father, Israelites! Never bury my bones in Egypt. I charge you never bury them at all till you can lay them down in the ancient sepulcher of our race. Be Israelites to the backbone, through and through, for the best possession is not what I can bequeath you in Egypt, which will pass away, but the heritage to which I point you--the spiritual heritage which I would gladly you should have. My bones shall charge you, Manasseh and Ephraim, not to make yourselves Egyptians, not to be conformed to the world nor to seek your rest here. Let your father's bones tempt you towards Canaan--never rest till you feel you have an interest in the spiritual blessings of the Covenant.

Once more, it seems to me that Joseph's faith in connection with his unburied bones showed itself in his willingness to wait God's time for the promised blessing. Says he, "I believe I shall be buried in Machpelah, and I believe that my people will come up out of Egypt. I believe, and I am willing to wait." Every man wants that when he dies he shall be decently buried soon. Who wants to have his bones hawked about? But this man will wait, wait for his funeral--wait on, however weary may be the time of Israel's captivity. It is a great thing to have waiting faith. "Stand still and see the salvation of God," is easier said than done.

"He that believes shall not make haste." We are, for the most part, in a childish hurry. We would like to be in Heaven tomorrow. If we were wise, we should be glad to keep out till God lets us in. We would like to have the resurrection tomorrow, and many are pining because the coming of Christ is not by-and-by. Wait the Lord's appointment, O impatient Grumbler. Be quiet of spirit and calm of heart--the vision will not tarry. Be willing to wait. Be willing to let your bones sleep in the dust till the trump of the resurrection sound, and if you could have a choice about it, refer your choice back again to your Lord in Heaven, for He knows what is best and right for you.

I like the idea of a man who could not wait in life, for he must die, but who proves the waitingness of his spirit by letting his bones wait till they could be deposited in Canaan. You will notice that Joseph had his wish, for when Israel went up out of Egypt you will find, in the fifteenth of Exodus, that Moses took care to carry with them the bones of Joseph. And, what is rather singular, those bones were not buried as soon as they came into Canaan. Nor were they buried during the long wars of Joshua with the various tribes.

But in the last verses of the book of Joshua, when nearly all the land had been conquered, and the country had been divided to the different tribes, and they had taken possession, then we read that they buried the bones of Joseph in the field of Shechem, in the place which Abraham had bought for a sepulcher. As if Joseph's remains might not be buried till they had won the country, until it was settled, and the Covenant was fulfilled. Then he must be buried, but not till then. How blessed is waiting faith which can let God take His time, and wait, believe in Him, let Him wait as long as He wills.

III. I must close with the third point. I think we have in our text, beloved Friends, AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR FAITH TO ACT UPON WHEN WE ALSO COME

TO THE TIME OF DEATH. We will imagine it to be very near, and the conception will be literally true to some, and true to us all in a degree. What shall I derive any comfort from when I come to die? Come, let me prepare my last dying speech. Now think it over. First, I would imitate Joseph by deriving my comfort from the Covenant, for that he did. That commandment concerning his bones was only made because he believed God would keep His Covenant to His people and bring them up out of Egypt. May you and I be able to say with David, "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Ah, my Soul, this is not dying, but only passing from earth to Heaven. Jesus, who is Himself the Covenant, soothes most blessedly the dying beds of His saints.

A Negro was asked when he had been sitting up to nurse his master one night, "How is your master!" Said he, "He is dying full of life." It is a grand thing when one has the Covenant to think on. You can then die full of life--you can pass away out of this lower life, being filled with the life eternal before the life temporal has quite gone out, so that you are never emptied out of life, but the life of Grace melts into the life of Glory, as the river into the ocean. Joseph may be an example to us, in that he drew his consolation from the future of his people. "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land."

Very often the dying thoughts of a Christian man are troubled about the condition of the Church of Christ. He fears that dark days are coming upon her. If a minister, he anxiously asks, "What will my people do, now that I can no longer lead and feed them? Will they not be like a flock without a shepherd?" But here will come in the consolation. There are better days for the Church of God. Though the fathers sleep--

"All the promises do travail, With a glorious day of Grace."

Though one after another we shall pass away, there are not dark days

for our descendants, but days of brightness are on the way. "Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children." "He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." The kings of the isles shall yet acknowledge Him, and the wanderers of the desert shall bow down before Him. Jesus, the Christ of God, must be King over all the earth, for God has sworn it, saying, "Surely all flesh shall see the salvation of God." The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." With such thoughts as these upon our minds, we may well close our eyes in death with a song upon our lips!

And then, my Brethren, we have another and brighter hope to die with--if die we must before it is fulfilled, and that is, Christ Jesus the Son of God will visit His people. Brethren, the glad hope of the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ may light up the chamber of death with hope. As Joseph said, "God will visit you." The time comes when the Lord

shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trump of the archangel and the voice of God. Let our dying testimony be to the effect that surely He comes quickly and His reward is with Him. We have not to look forward as the Jew did. He expected the first advent, but we watch for the second coming. This shall cheer us even in our departure, for if we die before He comes we shall yet share in the splendor, for the dead in Christ shall rise.

We may add to all this a hope concerning our bones. We may tell our weeping kindred, as they gather round our bed, to give our bones a decent sepulcher. They need not blazon our names, or write our fancied virtues on stone. But we will tell them that we shall rise again, and that we commit ourselves to the bosom of our Father and our God, with the full conviction that our dust shall yet be quickened anew--

"My eyes shall see Him in that day,

The God that died for me,

And all my rising bones shall say,

Lord, who is like to You?"

I do not know when a witness to the resurrection sounds more sweetly than it does from the lips of a saint who is just about to quit this mortal body, to enter into the Presence of his God. It is well to say, as you take leave of these hands, and feet, and eyes, and all the members of this mortal frame, "Farewell, poor body, I shall return to you again. You shall be sown in weakness, but you shall rise in power! You have been the faithful friend and servant of my soul, but you shall be still more fit for my spirit when the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised." May we take care that our last act shall be a triumph of faith, the crowning deed of our lives. God help us that it may be so!

Beloved, there is one sad reflection, namely, that we cannot hope to die triumphantly unless we live obediently. We cannot expect to exhibit faith in dying moments if we have not faith now. God grant you faith, O Unbeliever. Seeker, rest not till you have it, and may the Spirit of God give you the faith of God's elect, that living you may serve God, and dying you may honor Him as Joseph did of old. The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for His sake. Amen.

Chapter 59

The Sages, The Star, and The Savior

(No. 967)

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1870

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him." Matthew 2:2.

THE Incarnation of the Son of God was one of the greatest events in the history of the universe. Its actual occurrence was not, however, known to all mankind, but was specially revealed to the shepherds of Bethlehem and to certain Wise Men of the East. To shepherds--the illiterate, men little versed in human learning--the angels in choral song made known the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord. And they hastened to Bethlehem to see the great sight, while the Scribes, the writers of the Law and expounders of it, knew nothing concerning the long-promised birth of the Messiah. No angelic bands entered the assembly of the Sanhedrim and proclaimed that the Christ was born. And when the chief priests and Pharisees were met together, though they gathered around copies of the Law to consider where Christ should be born, yet it was not known to them that He was actually come, nor do they seem to have taken more than a passing interest in the matter, though they might have known that then was the time spoken of by the Prophets when the great Messiah should come. How mysterious are the dispensations of Divine Grace. The base things are chosen and the eminent are passed by! The advent of the Redeemer is revealed to the shepherds who kept their flocks of sheep by night, but not to the shepherds whose benighted sheep were left to stray. Admire, then, the

Sovereignty of

God.

The glad tidings were made known also to Wise Men, magi, students of the stars and of old Prophetic books from the far-off East. It would not be possible to tell how far off their native country lay. It may have been so distant that the journey occupied nearly the whole of the two years of which they spoke concerning the appearance of the star. Traveling was slow in those days, surrounded with difficulties and many dangers. They may have come from Persia, or India, or Tartary, or even from the mysterious land of Sinim, now known to us as China. If so, strange and uncouth must have been the speech of those who worshipped around the young Child at Bethlehem, yet needed He no interpreter to understand and accept their adoration.

Why was the birth of the King of the Jews made known to these foreigners, and not to those nearer home? Why did the Lord select those who were so many hundreds of miles away, while the children of the kingdom, in whose very midst the Savior was brought forth, were yet strangely ignorant of His Presence? See here again another instance of the Sovereignty of God. Both in shepherds and in Eastern magi gathering around the young Child, I see God dispensing His favors as He wills and, as I see it, I exclaim, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father. For so it seemed good in Your sight."

Herein we see again another instance of God's sovereign will--for as of old there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah the Prophet, but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto the woman of Sarepta. So many there were who were called wise men among the Jews, but unto none of them did the star appear. But it shone on Gentile eyes, and led

a chosen company from the ends of the earth to bow at Emmanuel's feet. Sovereignty in these cases clothed itself in the robes of mercy. It was great mercy that regarded the low estate of the shepherds, and it was far-reaching mercy which gathered from lands which lay in darkness a company of men made wise unto salvation. Mercy wearing her resplendent jewels was present with Divine Sovereignty in the lowly abode of Bethlehem. Is it not a delightful thought, that around the cradle of the Savior, as well as around His Throne in the highest Heaven, these two attributes meet? He makes known Himself--and here is mercy. But it is to those whom He has cho-

sen--and here He shows that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. We will now endeavor to learn a practical lesson from the story of the Wise Men who came from the East to worship Christ. We may, if God the Holy Spirit shall teach us, gather such instruction as may lead us also to become worshippers of the Savior, and joyful believers in Him.

Notice, first, their enquiry--may many of us become enquirers upon the same matter--"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Notice, secondly, their encouragement--"We have seen His star." Because they had seen His star they felt bold to ask, "Where is He?" And then, thirdly, their example--"We have come to worship Him."

I. THEIR ENQUIRY--"Where is He?" Many things are evident in this question. It is clear that when the Wise Men thus enquired, there was in their minds awakened interest. The King of the Jews was born, but Herod did not ask, "Where is He?" until his jealousy was excited, and then he asked the question in a malicious spirit. Christ was born at Bethlehem, near Jerusalem. Yet throughout all the streets of the holy city there were no enquirers, "Where is He?" He was to be the Glory of Israel, and yet in Israel there were few, indeed, who, like these Wise

Men, asked the question, "Where is He?"

My dear Hearers, I will believe that there are some here this morning whom God intends to bless, and it will be a very hopeful sign that He intends to do so, if there is an interest awakened in your mind concerning the work and Person of the Incarnate God. Those who anxiously desire to know of Him are but a slender company. Alas, when we preach most earnestly of Him, and tell of His sorrows as the Atonement for human sin, we are compelled to lament most bitterly the carelessness of mankind, and enquire mournfully--

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by; Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

He is despised and rejected of men. Men see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. But there are a chosen number who enquire diligently, and who come to receive Him. To these He gives power to become the sons of God. A happy circumstance it is, therefore, when there is interest evinced. Interest is not always evinced in the things of Christ, even by our regular hearers. It gets to be a mere mechanical habit to attend public worship. You become accustomed to sit through such a part of the service, to stand and sing at such another time, and to listen to the preacher with an apparent attention during the discourse.

But to be really interested, to long to know what it is all about--to know especially whether you have a part in it-- whether Jesus came from Heaven to save you. Whether for you He was born of the virgin--to make such personal enquiries with deep anxiety is far from being a general practice--would God that all who have ears to hear would hear in Truth. Wherever the Word is heard with solemn interest, it is a very encouraging sign. It was said of old, "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

When a man listens with deep attention to the Word of God, searches God's Book, and engages in thoughtful meditation with the view of understanding the Gospel, we have much hope of him! When he feels that there is something weighty and important, something worth the knowing in the Gospel of Jesus, then are we encouraged to hope good things of him.

But in the case of the Wise Men we see not only interest evinced, but belief avowed. They said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" They were, therefore, fully convinced that He was the King of the Jews, and had lately been born. As a preacher I feel it to be a great mercy that I have to deal generally with persons who have some degree of belief concerning the things of God. Would to God we had more missions to those who have no sort of faith and no knowledge of Christ. And may the day come when everywhere Jesus Christ shall be known. But here at home with the most of you we have something to begin with.

You do believe somewhat concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was born King of the Jews. Set much store by that which you have already believed. I count it no small advantage to a young man to believe his Bible is true. There are some who have a hard fight to reach so far as that, for infidel training has warped their minds. It is not, of course, an advantage which will save you--for many go down to Hell believing the Scriptures to be true--and thus they accumulate guilt upon themselves from that very fact.

But it is a fine vantage ground to occupy, to be assured that you have God's Word before you, and not to be troubled with questions about its Inspiration and authenticity. O that you may go from that point of faith to another, and become a hearty believer in Jesus! These Wise Men were so far advanced that they had some leverage for a further lift of faith, for they believed that Christ was born, and born a King. Many

who are not saved, yet know that Jesus is the Son of God. We have not to argue with you this morning to bring you out of Socinianism--no, you believe Jesus to be the Divine Savior.

Nor have we to reason against doubts and skepticisms concerning the Atonement, for these do not perplex you. This is a great mercy. You certainly stand in the position of highly favored persons. I only trust you may have Divine Grace given you to avail yourselves of the favorable position in which God has placed you. Value what you have already received. When a man's eyes have long been closed in darkness, if the oculist gives him but a little light he is very thankful for it--he is hopeful that the eye is not destroyed, that perhaps by another operation further scales may be removed-- and the full light may yet stream in upon the darkened eyeballs.

So, dear Friend, be thankful for any light. O Soul, so soon to pass into another world, so sure to be lost except you have the Divine Light, so certain to be cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth--be thankful for a spark of heavenly light! Prize it, treasure it, be anxious about it that it may come to something more, and who knows but yet the Lord will bless you with the fullness of His Truth?

When the great bridge across the Niagara was made, the difficulty was to pass the first rope across the broad stream. I have read that it was accomplished by flying a kite, and allowing it to fall on the opposite bank. The kite carried across a piece of string, then to the string was tied a line, and to the line a rope, and to the rope a stronger rope, and by-and-by Niagara was spanned, and the bridge was finished.

Even thus, by degrees, God works. It is a fair sight to see in human hearts a little interest concerning Divine things, a little desire after Christ, a feeble wish to know who He is and what He is, and

whether He is available to the sinner's case. This hunger will lead to a craving after more, and that craving will be followed by another, till at last the soul shall find her Lord and be satisfied in Him. In the Wise Men's case, therefore, we have, as I trust we have in some here, interest evinced, and a measure of belief avowed.

Furthermore, in the case of the Wise Men, we see ignorance admitted. Wise men are never above asking questions, because they are wise men--so the Magi asked, "Where is He?" Persons who have taken the name and degree of wise men, and are so esteemed, sometimes think it beneath them to confess any degree of ignorance, but the really wise think not so. They are too well instructed to be ignorant of their own ignorance. Many men might have been wise if they had but been aware that they were fools. The knowledge of our ignorance is the doorstep of the temple of knowledge.

Some think they know, and therefore never know. Had they known that they were blind, they would soon have been made to see, but because they say, "We see," therefore their blindness remains upon them.

Beloved Hearer, do you want to find a Savior? Would you gladly have all your sins blotted out? Would you be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ? Then blush not to enquire--admit that you do not know. How should you know if Heaven teach you not? How should any man attain the knowledge of Divine things, unless it be given him from Above?

We must all be taught of the Spirit of God, or be fools forever. To know that we need to be taught of the Holy Spirit is one of the first lessons that the Holy Spirit Himself teaches us. Admit that you need a Guide, and diligently enquire for one. Cry to God to lead you, and He will be your Instructor. Be not high-minded and self-sufficient. Ask for heavenly light, and you shall receive it. Is it not better to ask God to teach you, than to trust to your own unaided reason? Bow, then,

the knee--confess your aptness to err, and say, "What I know not, teach me."

Notice, however, that the Wise Men were not content with admitting their ignorance, but in their case there was information entreated. I cannot tell where they began to ask. They thought it likeliest that Jesus would be known at the metropolitan city. Was He not the King of the Jews? Where would He be so certain to be known as at the Capital? They went, therefore, to Jerusalem. Perhaps they asked the guards at the gate, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" and the guards laughed them to scorn, and replied, "We know no king but Herod." Then they met a loiterer in the streets, and to him they said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" and he answered, "What care I for such crazy questions? I am looking for a drinking companion." They asked a trader, but he sneered, and said, "Never mind kings, what will you buy, or what have you to sell?" "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" said they to a Sadducee, and he replied, "Be not such fools as to talk in that fashion, or if you do, pray call on my religious friend the Pharisee."

They passed a woman in the streets, and asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" but she said, "My child is sick at home, I have enough to do to think of my poor babe. I care not who is born, or who may die beside." When they went to the very highest quarters, they obtained but poor information, but they were not content till they had learned all that could be known. They did not know, at first, where the new-born King was, but they used every means to find Him and asked information on all hands.

It is delightful to see the holy eagerness of a soul which God has quickened. It cries, "I must be saved. I know something of the way of salvation, I am grateful for that, but I do not know all I want to

know, and I cannot rest satisfied till I do. If beneath the canopy of Heaven a Savior is to be found, I will have Him. If that Book can teach me how to be saved, I will turn its pages day and night. If any book within my reach may help me, I will spare no midnight oil if I may but in the reading find out Christ my Savior.

"If there is one whose preaching has been blessed to the souls of others, I will hang on his lips, if perhaps the Lord may be blessed to me, for Christ I must have--it is not I may or I may not have Him, but I must have Him! My hunger is great for this Bread of Heaven, my thirst insatiable for this Water of Life. Tell me, Christians, tell me, wise men, tell me, good men, tell me any of you who can tell--where is He that is born King of the Jews?--for Christ I must have, and I long to have Him now."

Notice further, that in reference to these Wise Men from the East, there was for their search after Christ a motive declared. "Where is He," said they, "that we may go and worship Him?" Ah, Soul, and if you would find Christ, let it be your motive that you may be saved by Him, and that from now on and forever you may live to His Glory. When it comes to this, that you do not hear the Gospel merely as a habit, but because you long to obtain its salvation, it will not be long before you will find Him. When a man can say, "I am going up to the House of God this morning, and O may God meet with me there," he will not long go there in vain.

When a hearer can declare, "As soon as I take my seat in the congregation, my one thought is, 'Lord, bless my soul this day.' " He cannot for long be disappointed. Usually in going up to God's House we get what we go for. Some come because it is the custom, some to meet a friend, some scarcely know why. But when you know what you come for, the Lord who gave you the desire will gratify it. I was pleased with

the word of a dear sister this morning when I came in at the back gate. She said to me, "My dear Sir, my soul is very hungry this morning. May the Lord give you bread for me."

I believe that food convenient will be given. When a sinner is very hungry after Christ, Christ is very near to him. The worst of it is, many of you do not come to find Jesus. It is not He you are seeking. If you were seeking Him, He would soon appear to you. A young woman was asked during a revival, "How is it you have not found Christ?" "Sir," she said, "I think it is because I have not sought Him." It is so. None shall be able to say at the last, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." In all cases at the last, if Jesus Christ is not found, it must be because He has not been devoutly, earnestly, importunately sought. For His promise is, "Seek, and you shall find." These Wise Men are to us a model in many things, and in this among the rest--that their motive was clear to themselves, and they avowed it to others. May all of us seek Jesus that we may worship Him! There was about the Wise Men an intense earnestness which we would delight to see in any who as yet have not believed in Jesus.

They were evidently not triflers. They came a long way. They underwent many fatigues, they spoke about finding the new-born King in a practical, common-sense way. They were not put off with this rebuff or that. They desired to find Him, and find Him they would. It is most blessed to see the work of the Spirit in men's hearts impelling them to long for the Savior to be their Lord and King. And so to long for Him that they mean to have Him, and will leave no stone untamed, by the Holy Spirit's help, but what they will be able to say, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, and He is become our salvation."

Am I, at this moment, speaking to anybody in particular? I trust I am.

Some years ago there was a young man, who, upon such a morning as this--cold, snowy, dark--entered a House of Prayer, as you have done today. I thought, as I came here, this morning, of that young man. I said to myself, "This morning is so very forbidding that I shall have a very small congregation, but perhaps among them there will be one like that young man."

To be plain with you, it comforted me to think that the morning when God blessed my soul, the preacher had a very small congregation, and it was cold and bitter, and therefore I said to myself this morning, "Why should not I go up merrily to my task--and preach if there should only be a dozen there?" For Jesus may intend to reveal Himself to some one as He did to me! And that someone may be a soul-winner, and the means of the salvation of tens of thousands in years to come. I wonder if that will occur to that young man yonder, for I trust he has the enquiry of the Wise Men upon his lips?

I trust he will not quench those desires which now burn within him, but rather may the spark be fanned to a flame, and may this day witness his decision for Jesus. Oh, has the Lord looked on that young woman, or on that dear child, or on yonder aged man? I know not who it may be, but I shall indeed bless God this morning if the cry may be heard from many a lip, "Sir, what must I do to be saved? Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

II. Having spoken of their enquiry, I shall now notice THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT. Something encouraged these Wise Men to seek Jesus. It was this, "We have seen His star." Now, the most of you seekers after Christ have a great encouragement in the fact that you have heard His Gospel. You live in a land where you have the Scriptures, where the ordinances of God's house are freely dispensed. These are, as it were,

Jesus Christ's star. They are meant to lead you to Himself. Here, observe, that to see His star was a great favor. It was not given to all the dwellers in the East or West to see His star.

These men, therefore, were highly privileged. It is not given to all mankind to hear the Gospel, Jesus is not preached, even, in all our streets. His Cross is not lifted high even in every place that is dedicated to His worship. You are highly favored, O my Friend, if you have seen the star, the Gospel, which points to Jesus! To see the star involved these Wise Men in great responsibility. For, suppose they had seen His star and had not set out to worship Him? They would have been far more guilty than others, who, not having received such an indication from Heaven, would not have been able to set it at nothing. Oh, think of the responsibility of some of you, who in your childhood heard of a Savior, for whom a mother has wept many tears--you know the Truth--in the theory of it at any rate. You have the responsibility of having seen His star.

The Wise Men did not regard the favor of seeing the star as a matter to be rested in. They did not say, "We have seen His star, and that is enough." Many say, "Well, we attend a place of worship regularly, is not that enough?" There are those who say, "We were baptized, Baptism brought regeneration with it. We come to the sacrament, and do we not get Grace through it?" Poor Souls! The star which leads to Christ they mistake for Christ Himself, and worship the star instead of the Lord. O may none of you ever be so foolish as to rest in outward ordinances! God will say to you, if you depend upon sacraments or upon public worship, "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto Me. Who has required this at your hands, to tread My courts?"

What cares God for outward forms and ceremonies? When I see men putting on white gowns, and scarves and bands, and singing their prayers, and

bowing and scraping, I wonder what sort of god it is they worship! Surely he must have more affinity with the gods of the heathen than with the great Jehovah who has made the heavens and the earth! Mark you well the exceeding glory of Jehovah's works on sea and land! Behold the heavens and their countless hosts of stars! Listen to the howling of the winds and the rush of the hurricane--think of Him who makes the clouds His chariot, and rides on the wings of the wind--and then consider whether this Infinite God is like unto that being to whom it is a matter of grave consequence whether a cup of wine is lifted in worship as high as a man's hair or only as high as his nose!

O foolish generation, to think that Jehovah is contained in your temples made with hands, and that He cares for your vestments, your processions, your postures, and your genuflections! You fight over your ritual--even to its jots and tittles do you consider it. Surely you know not the glorious Jehovah if you conceive that these things yield any pleasure to Him. No, Beloved, we desire to worship the Most High in all simplicity and earnestness of spirit, and never to stop in the outward form, lest we be foolish enough to think that to see the star is sufficient, and therefore fail to find the incarnate God.

Note well, that these Wise Men did not find satisfaction in what they had themselves done to reach the Child. As we have observed, they may have come hundreds of miles, but they did not mention it. They did not sit down and say, "Well, we have journeyed across deserts, over hills, and across rivers, it is enough." No, they must find the new-born King, nothing else would satisfy them. Do not say, dear Hearer, "I have been praying now for months, I have been searching the Scriptures for weeks, to find the Savior." I am glad you have done so, but do not rest in it. You must get Christ, or else you will

perish, after all your exertion and your trouble. Jesus you want, nothing more than Jesus, but nothing less than Jesus.

Nor must you be satisfied with traveling in the way the star would lead you, you must reach HIM. Do not stop short of eternal life. Lay hold on it, not merely seek it and long for it, but lay hold on eternal life, and do not be content until it is an ascertained fact with you that Jesus Christ is yours. I should like you to notice how these Wise Men were not satisfied with merely getting to Jerusalem. They might have said, "Ah, now we are in the land where the Child is born, we will be thankful and sit down."

No, but "Where is He?" He is born at Bethlehem. Well, they get to Bethlehem, but we do not find that when they reached that village they said, "This is a favored spot, we will sit down here." Not at all, they wanted to know where the house was. They reached the house, and the star got over it. It was a fair sight to see the cottage with the star above it, and to think that the new-born King was there--but that did not satisfy them. No, they went right into the house. They rested not till they saw the Child Himself, and had worshipped Him! I pray that you and I may always be so led by the Spirit of God that we may never put up with anything short of a real grasping of Christ, a believing sight of Christ as a Savior, as OUR Savior, as our Savior even now.

If there is one danger above another that the young seeker should strive against, it is the danger of stopping short of a hearty faith in Jesus Christ. While your heart is tender like wax, take care that no seal but the seal of Christ is set on you. Now that you are uneasy and out of comfort, make this your vow, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me." It would be better for you never to be awakened than to be lulled to sleep by Satan--for a sleep that follows upon a partial conviction is generally a deeper slumber than any other that falls upon

the sons of men. My Soul, I charge you get to the blood of Christ, and be washed in it!

Get to the life of Christ, and let that life be in you, that you are, indeed, God's child. Put not up with suppositions, be not satisfied with appearances and perhaps! Rest nowhere till you have said--God having given you the faith to say it--"He loved me and gave Himself for me, He is all my salvation and all my desire." See, then, how these Wise Men were not made by the sight of the star to keep away from Christ, but they were encouraged by it to come to Christ. And may you be encouraged, dear Seeker, this morning, to come to Jesus by the fact that you are blessed with the Gospel. You have an invitation given you to come to Jesus. You have the motions of God's Spirit upon your conscience, awakening you. O come, come and welcome! And let this strange winter's day be a day of brightness and of gladness to a many a seeking soul.

I have turned my thoughts on this last head into verse, and I will repeat the lines--

where is Christ my King? /languish for the sight,
Gladly would I fall to worshipping, For He's my soul's delight.
Himself, Himself alone,
1 seek no less, no more,
Or on His Cross, or on His Throne,
I'd equally adore.
The Sages saw His star,
But rested not content,
The way was rough, the distance far,
Yet on that way they went.
And now my thoughts discern
The sign that Christ is near,

With love unquenchable Iburn,

To enjoy His company.

No star nor heavenly sign

My soul's desire can fill,

For Him, my Lord, my King Divine,

My soulis thirsting still.

III. And now we shall conclude, by considering THE EXAMPLE of these Wise Men. They came to Jesus, and in so doing, they did three things--they saw, they worshipped, they gave. Those are three things which every Believer here may do this morning again, and which every Seeker should do for the first time.

First, they saw the young Child. I do not think they merely said, "There He is," and so ended the matter, but they stood still and looked. Perhaps for some minutes they did not speak. About His very face I do not doubt there was a supernatural beauty. Whether there was a beauty to everyone's eye I know not, but to theirs there was assuredly a superhuman attraction. The Incarnate God! They gazed with all their eyes. They looked, and looked, and looked again. They glanced at His mother, but they fixed their eyes on Him.

"They saw the young Child." So, too, this morning let us think of Jesus with fixed and continuous thought. He is God, He is Man, He is the Substitute for sinners. He is willing to receive all who trust Him. He will save, and save this morning, every one of us who will rely upon Him. Think of Him. If you are at home this afternoon, spend the time in thinking upon Him. Bring Him before your mind's eye, consider and admire Him. Is it not a wonder that God should enter into union with man and come to this world as an Infant? He who made Heaven and earth hangs on a woman's breast for us!

For our redemption the Word was made flesh! This Truth will breed the

brightest hope within your soul. If you follow that Babe's wondrous life till it ends at the Cross, I trust you may there be able to give such a look at Him that, like when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and they that looked were healed, so you, looking, may be healed of all your spiritual diseases! Though it is many a year since I first looked to Him, I desire to look to Jesus again. The incarnate God! My eyes swim with tears to think that He who might have crushed me into Hell forever, becomes a young Child for my sake!

See Him, all of you, and seeing, worship. What did the Wise Men do next? They worshipped Him. We cannot properly worship a Christ whom we do not know. "To the unknown God" is poor worship. But, oh, when you think of Jesus Christ, whose goings forth were of old from everlasting! The eternally-begotten Son of the Father! And then when you see Him coming here to be a Man of the substance of His mother, and know and understand why He came and what He did when He came--then you must fall down and worship Him--

"Son of God, to You we bow, You are Lord, and only You. You the woman's promised Seed; You who did for sinners bleed."

We worship Jesus! Our faith sees Him go from the manger to the Cross, and from the Cross right up to the Throne, and there where Jehovah dwells, amidst the insufferable Glory of the Divine Presence stands the Man, the very Man who slept at Bethlehem in the manger! There He reigns as Lord of lords. Our souls worship Him again. You are our Prophet, every word You say, Jesus, we believe and desire to follow--You are our Priest, Your sacrifice has made us clean--we are washed in Your blood. You are our King! Command, we will obey. Lead on, and we will follow. We worship You. We should spend much time in worshipping the Christ, and He should ever have the highest place in our reverence.

After worshipping, the Wise Men presented their gifts. One broke open

his casket of gold, and laid it at the feet of the new-born King.
Another presented frankincense--one of the precious products of the country from which they came. And the other laid myrrh at the Redeemer's feet. All these they gave to prove the truth of their worship. They gave substantial offerings with no stingy hand.
And now, after you have worshipped Christ in your soul, and seen Him with the eye of faith, it will not need that I should say to you, give Him yourself, give Him your heart, give Him your substance. Why, you will not be able to help doing it! He who really loves the Savior in his heart cannot help devoting to Him his life, his strength, his all.
With some people, when they give Christ anything, or do anything for Him, it is dreadfully forced work.
They say, "The love of Christ ought to constrain us." I do not know that there is any such text as that in the Bible, however. I do remember one text that runs thus--"The love of Christ constrains us." If it does not constrain us, it is because it is not in us. It is not merely a thing which ought to be, it must be. If any man loves Christ, he will very soon be finding out ways and means of proving his love by his sacrifices. Go home, Mary, and fetch the alabaster box, and pour the ointment on His head, and if any say, "Why this waste?" you will have a good reply, you have had much forgiven you, and therefore you love much.
If you have gold, give it. If you have frankincense, give it. If you have myrrh, give it to Jesus. And if you have none of these things, give Him your love--all your love, and that will be gold and spices all in one! Give Him your tongue, speak of Him. Give Him your hands, work for Him. Give Him your whole self. I know you will, for He loved you, and gave Himself for you. The Lord bless you, and may this Christmas Lord's-Day morning be a very memorable day to many out of the crowd

assembled here. I am surprised to see so vast a number present, and I can only hope the blessing will be in proportion, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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