

A Searching Question

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon challenges listeners to seriously consider their spiritual allegiance, emphasizing that every person belongs either to Christ or to Satan, and this choice determines their eternal destiny.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 30:13, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, John 8:44, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Matthew 25:34-41, John 10:27-28, John 3:3, Ezekiel 36:26

Topics: "New Birth", "Eternal Destiny"

Description

In this compelling sermon, C.H. Spurgeon confronts listeners with the urgent question of spiritual ownership, urging them to recognize that every person belongs either to Christ or to Satan. He explains the practical and eternal implications of this allegiance, calls for self-examination regarding one's spiritual birth and associations, and encourages a decisive response. Spurgeon's passionate appeal highlights the necessity of belonging to Christ for eternal salvation and warns of the grave consequences of spiritual neutrality or allegiance to the enemy.

Transcript

"To whom do you belong?" 1 Samuel 30:13.

This question was addressed by David to a young man of Egypt who was servant to an Amalekite. He had fallen sick and his master, being in a hurry, had left him to perish alone in the field and had gone his way. Had the master taken his servant with him and nursed him, his own life might have been preserved, but God avenged this poor servant, who had been so neglected, by making him the means of revealing to David where his master was—and David's sharp and swift sword soon overtook him and his brother plunderers.

At the very outset we learn from this question that we cannot have servants, or children, or friends without being compromised by them. If we have servants, people will be sure to ask them the question, "To whom do you belong?" Should they bear a bad character, or show a bad training, or seem to be so wretched that they betoken a pinching, grasping, grinding, cruel, tyrannical master, people will soon be able to read our characters in our servants' faces! They will draw their own conclusion as to what the master is from what the servants are. It is more especially fair to do so in the case of a man's children. Some children are very pert, willful, ill-mannered. Were anyone to ask whether there was a rod kept in the house they came from, he might be very speedily answered, "No." And if you pressed the question, "To whom do those children belong?" it would soon be found that they belonged to some self-indulgent parents who were too fond of

themselves to take the trouble to correct their children. You can generally read a man's character in his boy's face and in his boy's conduct and conversation. We should remember this and see that we send our children forth not needing to be ashamed that they should tell to whom they belong! The same is the case with regard to Church members. Any member whom we receive into this Church may compromise all the rest. If any one member is found in bad or suspicious company, the question is sure to be asked, "To whom do you belong?" Instead of laying down his delinquencies at his own door as being inconsistent, men are quite sure to put them at our door. The minister is generally the horse that is saddled with his people's sins. He would willingly bear them on his own heart in deep humiliation before God if he knew that his people also would bear them in penitence before God. Let every Church member remember that he imperils the honor of the whole Church by his inconsistency—and it may be said of him, "That man sinned not alone."

This, however, is not my main point tonight. I am going to aim at something which directly affects our eternal position and standing before God. I shall first open up the question in a different sense from that in which it was asked by David. Then, secondly, I will try to guide you in your response. And when I have done that, I will give a few words of good advice to those who have individually and respectively to furnish the answer.

I. First, then, "TO WHOM DO YOU BELONG?"

This is a question of universal pertinence. We may put it to any man most fairly because there is an owner both of the Church and of the world. As for the Church, we are Christ's. "You are not your own, for you are bought with a price." The Church is Christ's body, "the fullness of Him that fills all in all." And the world, too, is not without its owner. We read of one whose name is "the prince of this world"—"the prince of the power of the air; the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." While some men are the children of God, are all other men to be regarded as orphans? Oh, no! Christ says to them, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." There are no unowned men! We are, every one of us, either ranked under the banner of Prince Immanuel, to serve Him and fight His

battles, or else beneath the Black Prince, Satan—enrolled to do evil and to perish in our sins! It is a very proper question, then, to ask of every man and woman, "To whom do you belong?"

The question, too, is one which can be answered, because a man must belong either to one owner or the other. It is no use troubling people with questions which are too mysterious to be answered, but this is plain and pointed. You either belong to God or else you belong to His enemy. You are either bought with Jesus' precious blood or else you are still a bond slave of Satan. Which are you? If it were possible to dwell in an intermediate state, this might be a puzzling enquiry, but there are no neutralities in religion. There is no such thing as being in the valley while the two hosts are on either side on the mountains. You are either this day standing shoulder to shoulder with Prince Immanuel's warriors, or else, when the muster roll of the army on the opposite side is read, you are most certainly numbered there. All attempts to serve God and the world must end in bitter failure. Mark Antony yoked two lions together and drove them through the streets of Rome—but no man shall ever yoke together the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the Pit. No man ever tries to walk on two sides of the road at the same time unless he is intoxicated—and it argues gross intoxication of mind and spirit when a man attempts to serve both God and mammon—to win eternal life, and yet to live like the spiritually dead! This is a question which you can answer, my Brothers and Sisters. Now do not play with your eternal interests and say, "Well, I am sure I don't know." You do know. Do not put it off with quibbles! Do not say you will make the enquiry

by-and-by. You know right now whether you are a child of God or not! Or else if you are half-afraid that you are not the Lord's, and you are saying—

"'Tis a point I long to know"—

then you will never be happy until you do know—and you will not be able, I think, to give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till, in answer to my question, "To whom do you belong?" you can say, "I belong to Christ. He has bought me with His blood and I am His in life and shall be His in death—and His throughout eternity."

This is a question of a very practical character. We are sometimes told that we preach upon subjects which do not concern the ordinary race of men. Secularism comes and tells us that we are dealing with another life, when we ought to be teaching people what is proper to be done in this life. Yes, but that is a mistake, for there is nothing more practical for daily life than true religion—and this question is one of the practical ones which true religion suggests! Remember, dear Friends, to whomever you belong, you are quite sure to serve your master. If you belong to Satan, I know that you will do Satan's work. Perhaps you will do it in his uniform and there is some sort of honesty in that. Perhaps you will curse, and swear, drink and so on—that is serving Satan in Satan's uniform. But it is just possible that you will do Satan's work in Christ's uniform! You may wear the cross on your arm and yet, for all that, there may be a devil in your heart, like some of the old inns we have read of which had the sign of an angel outside, but they served the devil within. Doubtless there are many men of this sort nowadays. If you are Satan's, you will serve Satan. But if you are Christ's, you will serve Christ. You surely will, for it is written of all Christ's servants. "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 henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." Christ's servants serve Him. Is it not written, "His servants shall serve Him"? Your whole life on earth will be affected by your answer to the question, "To whom do you belong?"

But then remember what a weight hangs upon this question with regard to your eternal interest. It will all depend, at the last, as to whether you shall enter Heaven or Hell, on this question, "To whom do you belong?" If you belong to Christ, this shall be your reception, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But if you do not belong to Christ, what will be the fate of the best of you? You will knock at the gate with the piteous cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" And what will be the answer? "I know you not." If you had belonged to Christ, He would have known His own property. But in that day He will disown you, and tell you, "You are not Mine; depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

"Eternal weal or endless woe" hangs, then, on this question, "To whom do you belong?" Harps of gold, songs of celestial harmony, crowns of eternal glory are yours if you belong to Christ! But oh, if you are not Christ's and you live and die without an interest in Him, then groans, cries, awful despair, looks of burning wrath and piercings of almighty vengeance must be your everlasting doom! To sail forever across a sea of anguish and neither founder nor reach a port. To climb forever the burning mountain of despair and neither sit still, nor perish, nor yet reach the summit! Forever

climbing knee-deep in grief and agony and yet never, never finding an end to it all is your eternal reward! Be careful, then, that you answer this question very solemnly as in the sight of God, for on this—

"Slender thread,

Hang everlasting things."

I am not afraid that you will not eventually answer the question. I am afraid, however, that you will say, "It does not matter just now." It will matter very soon. How soon do men come to their graves? Full many of them stumble on them unawares! I saw a man the other day in as good bodily health as I think I ever saw any man to be. And soon after it was said to me, "Do you remember So-and-So?" "Yes." "He is dead!" I drew my breath. Dead? Why the man looked as if he would certainly live for another twenty, or thirty, or forty years. Dead? Can it really be so? And then I met the next day with another who said, "You know Mrs. So-and-So's husband?" "Yes." "He is dead." Sometimes I begin to wonder that I find anybody alive! At the head of such a vast congregation as this, there are so many journeys to the tomb for me to make that I feel, perhaps, more than any of you, that I live in a dying world! Standing with my foot once or twice a week on the edge of the grave and saying, "Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes," over so many of my fellow mortals, I dare not look upon you as living men, but only as men who are soon to die! Would God that I could add of all of you, that I look upon you as men and women who are going to the land of the living where they never die!

This question will press hard upon you, dear Friends, when you have to go upstairs to undress for your last sleep. It will press hard upon you when they wipe the clammy sweat from your brow and death begins to glaze your eyes. It will press hard upon you, Sinner, when the death rattle is in your throat and you have the gloomy answer in your soul, "I fear that I am not Christ's, but am without God and without hope." But O, Christian, what a solace it will yield you, at the last, to be able to feel, when the eventide has come and you are about to sleep the last great slumber, "I am Christ's! And I go to rest upon His bosom till the trumpet of the archangel shall startle my slumbering ashes and shall bid them rise in the image of my dear Redeemer! I am Christ's! And though I die, yet shall I live. I am Christ's! And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God!"

II. Secondly, with great brevity, I WILL TRY AND HELP YOU IN MAKING A RESPONSE.

It will go a great way towards it, dear Friends, if you will tell me where you were born. 'Where I was born?' asks one, "are you desirous to know how old I am?" Well, I do mean that though perhaps in a different sense from what you put upon my enquiry. You were all born once and it matters nothing where you were born that time, or very little indeed. But were you ever born a second time? You do not know? What? Do you not know that you were ever privileged with a new birth! Were you born a second time, you would know it! A man cannot have spiritual life in him and yet be unconscious of it. He may sometimes doubt, but there are other times when he knows and feels the operation of new faculties. Were you ever born twice? Recollect that every man who is only born once will have to die twice—but the man who is born twice will only have to die once—and even that once dying will be no moribund experience, for it will only be the gate into eternal life! To be born twice is to escape the second death, but to be born only once is to fall into the second death forever. Are you born-again? If so, you are Christ's.

"But," says one, "what is it to be born-again? Is it to have a few drops of water sprinkled on my forehead by a priest? Or is it to be immersed in floods of water?" These regenerate not the soul. It is to have a new nature put into you by the Holy Spirit according to God's own Covenant promise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." This it is to be born-again! And if you are not born-again, however moral or good you may be, you do not belong to Christ—you belong to Satan—and with him you have your part.

It will help you, again, to answer this question if you will first answer another, What company do you keep?' do not mean to ask whether you associate with the immoral. Of course if you do that, that settles the point at once. You who associate with persons of immoral lives should recollect that you will be bound up with this company—and as you have been with thieves, drunkards and harlots here, you will go with them where they go—and be bound up with them in bundles to be burned. But I mean, where is your chosen company? It is very hard for some people to get the company they would wish to have. Some of you are placed in positions in life where you are obliged to associate very much with the ungodly, but I will put the question so as not to hurt your mind, "When you can pick your company, where do you go?" It is written, in the Acts of the Apostles, "And being let go, they went to their own company." Now, when you are let go and can go where you like, where do you go? I was sitting lately by the bedside of a poor woman who was very ill. We

had been talking of the things of God. And among other evidences which she was mentioning as to her reason for believing that she was going to Heaven before long, she said, "I never could bear the company of the wicked and I do not think that God will send me, in the next life, where I never would go in this life. I have always loved to be with His people and though I have been the vilest of them all, yet still I love to bow with them in prayer and to join with them in holy song. I have had my happiest times when I have been with the people of God and I think He will not take me away from the people I have associated with in my lifetime." If you belong to Satan, you know you will go with your fellow servants. But if you belong to Christ, you will look out for those who wear Christ's uniform and you will go with them. The old proverb says that "Birds of a feather flock together."

There is a story told in the old legends, of a holy young man who once went to the theater but the devil went into the theater that night—the devil does go there occasionally—and he took this young man off with him! A certain holy man, to whom this young man belonged, went to the devil and he said, "You have taken away one of my disciples. He belongs to me. He is a very excellent young man and you have no business with him!" "Ah!" said the devil, "but I found him on my premises and I took him." I think the devil was right for once! Let those who would be accounted Christians and yet occasionally associate with the world in its doubtful pleasures, think of that story and keep off the devil's premises! You will be sure to be known by your company! A young man who had begun to associate with bad companions told his father he did not know that he could get any hurt by doing so. The father stooped down and, taking the tongs in his hands, picked up a black coal and told his son to hold it. The son said he would rather not. "It is not hot," said the father, "it won't burn you." "No," replied the son, "but if it won't burn me, it will blacken me." So you who wish to have an exemplary character before God and before men, remember that if ill company does not burn you to your hurt, it is sure to blacken you by damaging your reputation! However, as I said before, we can tell you by your company. Dead fish float down the stream, but live fish swim against it. Do you swim against the stream? Have you learned to go against the current? Do you strive to get up, up towards the great Source of everything that is good and true or do you float along the stream of pleasure with the mass of the world? Then you may readily know to which side you belong.

You may judge, again, by this, What is your dialect? I suppose a person well up in the dialects of the various counties would very soon discover that I came from Essex. At any rate, if I meet a West-country man, or a brother from the Midland counties and especially one from Yorkshire, I know within a little time whereabouts he came from by his particular twang. There is a dialect about people by which you can tell them. Not that you can always tell a man's character in five minutes, but give him time—let him talk his heart out and especially let him get a little cross, or a little excited—and you will very soon find him out by

the words he uses. What is your dialect? Is it anything that is impure, loose, low? Or do you desire to speak as Christ spoke, so that your conversation may be seasoned with salt and may minister edification to your hearers." It is a very bad sign when a man professes to be religious, yet lets an oath out now and then—when he comes to a place of worship regularly and yet says some very nasty, ugly words sometimes. I am afraid there is death in that pot! If the Lord does not cure you in the mouth, depend upon it, He has not cured you down deep in the heart. There is a common saying about a man being "good at bottom," but I do not believe in it, for if a man is not good on the top, you may depend upon it that he is not good at bottom! If you went to Covent Garden Market and wanted to buy some fruit, and you found it rotten at the top of the basket, you would not believe the salesman if he said, "My dear Sir, it is very good at bottom." "No," you would say, "excuse me, but you always put the best on the top." So, when a man's talk is not what it should be—and his conduct and conversation are contrary to those of a Christian—you may rest assured that he does not belong to Christ, for they who are Christ's have had their hearts washed and He who has washed their hearts will be quite sure to wash their mouths.

Another thing by which you may judge to whom you belong is, What have you learned to do? Servants will learn something from the masters to whom they are apprenticed. If you have been an apprentice to the devil, I have no doubt that you have learned his trade—you will be an enemy to God—you will be a despiser of Divine things. But if you have been with Christ, it will be said of you as it was of Peter and John, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." They had something of His boldness, His meekness, His gentleness, His holiness, His courage, His affection, His disinterestedness, His honesty and, in their measure, they had His virtues. If you have been looking into the glass of God's Word and have not, in some degree, been conformed to the image of Christ, tremble for yourselves! Christ saves sinners, but He does not save them in their sins, but from their sins! And when Christ once gets His hands upon a man, He

casts out the devils that once dwelt in him and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, being henceforth bound to do God's will and to walk according to God's Word!

If you tell me that you belong to Christ, I should like to ask a witness or two. Oh, it is so easy to get into a Christian Church and make a profession! The Lord knows that I have used my best diligence—and I can say the same of my Brothers, the elders—we use our best diligence to allow none to join this Church who are not sincere Believers. But, after all, what does our vigilance amount to? If you choose to be hypocrites, you can easily deceive such poor creatures as we are! The best witnesses, I think, which you could bring as to your belonging to Christ would be witnesses of this kind—you can pray very nicely at the Prayer Meeting. You could preach a bit if you were asked. You seem such a good man when you come among God's people. But I would like to ask your wife about you. How does he behave to you, Ma'am? Because if this man does not make a good husband, he is no Christian, for Christianity makes a man the best of husbands, the best of sons, the best of fathers, the best of brothers, the best of servants! If you are a servant, I would like to ask your master about you. Servants who stand about lazily, propping up walls and then talk about being Christians, may talk a long while before their masters will believe them! Masters and mistresses, too, who are always in bad tempers and making much of little faults, and unkind to servants, may talk as long as they will about being like Jesus Christ, but their servants would need a microscope to see the likeness!

I would like to ask the man who professes to be a Christian, what the angels see him do. There is a little room upstairs, your closet of devotion, or perhaps you use your bedside for prayer. I would like to know how you behave there. It is not difficult for a man who never prays to make a fine boast of his religion. It is

not enough for you to kneel down, but do you ever have any real dealings with God? Do you have real communion with Christ? Do you talk to Him as a man talks to his friends? Do you pour out your heart before Him? Oh, the heart-searching God knows how many there are who are fair trees outside, but are rotten within—how many there are who are but painted harlots! We sometimes read in the papers of certain people who can enamel faces, hide blotches and make them look beautiful. I wish there were none of this enameling in the Christian world, but I am afraid that there is a great deal of it. People get enamelled up to a certain pitch of piety, but what you need is a religion that will stand the test of the hour of death, of the Day of Judgment and of the eyes of the all-searching and all-seeing God! And if you have not this, it matters not how delicately and daintily you may walk before men, nor how much you have been esteemed and respected—God will pull you down and give a dreadful answer to the question—"To whom do you belong?"

Ah, this is a question for the preacher and it is one which he may well ask himself! There are many of you here, perhaps, who have been blessed under my word, who think that surely, surely, the preacher cannot be deceived. But ah, he knows what it is to search his own heart with an awful earnestness, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway! My Brothers, you who are associates with me in as deacons and elders, I charge you before the living God, do not take your piety at second-hand. The oldest of you may well search yourselves, for your experience, after all, may be a lie. Unless you have closed with Christ and have really passed from death unto life, you will not enter into Heaven because of your office! And you members of this Church, I do pray you, on your knees ask the Master again and again to search your hearts and see if there is any wicked way in you and lead you in the way everlasting, for unless your heart is right with Him, you cannot answer this question, "To whom do you belong?" without a shudder and a fear!

III. I must soon close and as I have so little time left, I will only spend a few minutes in GIVING YOU SOME GOOD ADVICE.

To the Christian let me speak first. You belong to Christ, Christian. You say you do—you know you do. Well, then—what? Obey Him. If anybody else wants to be master over you, do not allow it, for you are Christ's. Let His Word be your law. Let His wish be your will.

You belong to Christ, then love Him. Let your heart embrace Him. Let your lips sing of Him. Let your whole soul be filled with Him. You have been bought with His precious blood—remember the price of your redemption and do not give a cold heart in return for the warm heart's blood of your Redeemer.

You belong to Christ, then trust Him. Rest nowhere but on Him. Day by day sit beneath His Cross and view Him as your Savior.

You belong to Christ, then be decided for Him. Never halt, or raise a question about your allegiance to Him. You are Christ's, you are God's—then cling to Him. In the olden times, the inhabitants of the county of Durham would never

go to the wars with our kings because they claimed an immunity granted them by the bishop. They were called "holy workfolk." They had to attend to the cathedral. So let it be with you, Christian—never go into sin because you are one of the holy workfolk. You are engaged in Christ's work and you cannot, therefore, serve Satan. Keep close to Christ to whom you belong—so close to Him that you may grow up into His image and become like unto He whose you are and whom you serve!

To those who cannot say that they love Christ, I have a word of advice to give. It is clear that you belong to Satan. Friend, might I whisper a word in your ear? I would run away from my master if I were you! He is a bad master. He treats you shamefully. The joys he gives you are all rotten. They look very pretty, like the apples of Sodom, but when you have grasped them, they turn into a handful of ashes! After all, your days of pleasure have no real pleasure in them and your mirth is poor stuff, isn't it? You have spent your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not.

Recollect that one of these days Satan will desert you. I mean when you come to die. The pleasures which he gives you now will all fail you then. I will tell you what I saw, this afternoon, as I came here. I daresay you will think it a very curious thing for me to mention. I saw half-a-dozen donkeys turned out on Clapham Common to feed, with the snow two or three inches deep, and I thought to myself, "I daresay the counter-mongers have been using these poor donkeys to do their work all morning, and this is all that they get for it at last." That is very much how the devil uses his servants—he works them as hard as ever he can while they are alive, and then he has nothing to give them when their life-work is done. How piteously did Hume's poor mother write to her son when she lay a-dying! She had, at one time, made a profession of religion, but had been induced by her son to give it up. And now she wrote to him and said, "Come and give me some of the consolations of your philosophy which you promised me." Poor Hume had no consolations for her in his philosophy—it was just like being turned out to feed on Clapham Common with all the snow fallen on it! It is a poor, dreary thing—there is nothing there for the soul to feed upon, try as long as it may.

Oh, think of what this master of yours will do for you when you come to stand in the Day of Judgment! He cannot plead for you—he will be a fellow sinner with you! He will be arraigned at the same bar to be punished as well as you! You may look to him, but if he can do anything, it will only be to laugh at you and increase your torment!

If I were you, I say again, I would run away from my master. I do not read that that poor man who was sent into the fields to feed swine ever gave his master any notice when he left him. His master "sent him into his fields to feed swine; and he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave unto him." Then came the thought, "I will arise and go to my father," and away he went! And he did not stop to give his master three months' notice, or tell him he must get someone else! The fact is, it was such a bad place that he was glad to get away from it directly—and he had such a bad master that he started off at once. I would to God that some sinner here would do the same tonight! Give your master no notice! He does not deserve any. Leave him! You have been sailing under the black flag all these years—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty—there is a gray-headed sinner yonder, 70 years sailing under that black flag! Down with it, Sir! Thank God it is not nailed to the mast! It will be when you die—if it is there then, it will be nailed there to fly there forever! But it is not nailed to the mast now. Down with it! Down with it! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would pull it down and put up the blood-red Cross in its place, that you might sail henceforth under the flag of Immanuel!

"Well," says one, "I would gladly change my master, but would Christ have me?" Try Him! Try Him as the prodigal son tried his father. Go and put your head on your Father's bosom and weep out such a confession as this—"I have sinned against Heaven, and before You, and am no more worthy to be called Your son." And before you have finished your confession, you will hear Him saying in your soul, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." God is far more ready to forgive you than you are to ask Him for pardon! Only acknowledge your sin, plead the blood of Jesus, put your trust in Him and my God, my Father, will delight to receive you! He will say, "This, My son, was dead,

and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. "He will be glad! His angels will rejoice and His saints will make melody!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 SAMUEL 30:1-25.

David had joined the army of the Philistines, but, as the Philistine lords suspected him, he was obliged to leave, so he went back to the little city of Ziklag, which King Achish had given him.

Verses 1, 2. And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire, and had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. They were roving bands of marauders and, no doubt, preserved the women alive to sell them for slaves, the main object of those robbers being gain.

3, 4. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. Weary with their marching, they had hoped to rest at home. But now that everything was gone, the strong men, who were not often moved to weeping, wept till they could weep no longer! The very sources of tears were dried up by the exceeding heat of their grief.

5, 6. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him. These rough men, who had not all joined him from the best of motives, now turned against him for having left the city defenseless.

6, Because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged

himself in the LORD his God [See Sermon #1606, Volume 27—ZIKLAG—OR, DAVID ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN HIS GOD] Blessed faith that finds a secure shelter even amid the ashes of his burned home, and when even his own followers have turned against him!

7, 8. And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray you, bring me here the ephod. And Abiathar brought there the ephod to David. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue: for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. The Hebrew runs, "Pursue, for overtaking you shall overtake, and recovering you shall recover." That is to say, the work shall be done perfectly—and so it was.

9-17. So David went, he and the six-hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred stayed behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor. And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom do you belong? And from where are you? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongs to Judah, and upon the south of

Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Can you bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God that you will neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this company. And when he had brought him down, behold they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. It is noteworthy that the four hundred who escaped were equal in number to the whole of David's attacking force, so that, manifestly, God was with these valiant men, or else they would have been completely outnumbered.

18-20. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken to them: David recovered all And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drove before those other

cattle, and said, This is David's spoil [See Sermon #2017, Volume 34—DAVID'S SPOIL] That which was over and above what had been taken from Ziklag was very properly appropriated by David. I thought, as I read that, "David recovered all," how truly it can be said that the greater Son of David has recovered all. All that was lost by sin, our glorious and victorious Captain has recovered! What, then, shall be His spoil?

It was foretold that "He shall divide the spoil with the strong." Let your hearts and mine, and all we are, and all we have, be yielded up to Him—and let us say of it all, "This is Jesus' spoil, and to Him be Glory evermore!"

21. And Davidd came to thee two hundredmen, which were so faint that they couldnot followDavid, whom they had made also to stay at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. There are some fainting and sick folk detained at home—I pray our blessed Lord to salute every one of them wherever they are at this moment.

22, 23. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those who went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that theymaylead them away, and depart Then saidDavid, You shallnot do so, my brethren. They were poor brethren for David to have. They were brethren by race, but not brethren by Grace. Yet David was wise in speaking to them as he did. It is always well, when you are opposing people, to do it courteously. You can often prevail with soft words if you have strong arguments. David said, "You shall not do so, my brethren."

23-26. With that which the LORD hasgiven us, who haspreserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute

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