

Christian Sympathy

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately teaches that true Christian sympathy involves heartfelt compassion and practical action toward the needy, reflecting the love of Christ and essential for effective ministry.

Scripture: Job 30:25, Matthew 5:7, Romans 12:15, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 1 John 3:17, Galatians 6:2, 1 Timothy 2:1

Topics: "Compassion", "Christian Service"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound biblical call to Christian sympathy, urging believers to cultivate heartfelt compassion and practical generosity. He highlights the natural human capacity for sympathy, the higher standard set for Christians, and the example of Christ's tender love. Spurgeon also emphasizes the power of sympathy in ministry and its role in drawing others to the gospel. This sermon challenges believers to embody a living, active compassion that reflects the heart of Jesus.

Transcript

"Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?"—Job 30:25.

Job, in his great indignation at the shameful accusation of unkindness to the needy, pours forth the following very solemn imprecation—"If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." Thus vehemently making a tremendous appeal to heaven, he shakes off the slander into the fire as Paul shook the viper from his hand. I trust there are many present who, if the like charge should be laid to their door, might as boldly deny it; not in the same form of imprecation, for that is forbidden to the Christian man, but with all the positiveness which can dwell in the "Yea, yea, "Nay, nay" of the followers of Jesus. I trust that many of you can in your measure use the language of the man of Uz, and say, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." In the two questions of my text Job claims something more than merely having helped the poor with gifts, he declares that he wept and grieved for them. His charity was of the heart. He considered their case; laid their sorrows to his own soul, and lent his eyes to weep and his heart to mourn. "Did I not weep for him

that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" Human sympathy is the subject of our present meditation, and I shall labor to excite in you those emotions which are the genuine result of sympathy when it is truly felt. Practical sympathy is my aim; I trust your liberality, at the end of the sermon, will prove that I have hit the center of my target.

Human sympathy, then, its commendations, its hindrances, its sure fruits, and its special application to the case in hand this morning.

I. HUMAN SYMPATHY, ITS COMMENDATIONS.

1. We may say of it, first, that even nature dictateth that man should feel a sympathy for his kind. Humanity, had it remained in its unfallen estate would have been one delightful household of brothers and sisters. If our first parents had never sinned, we should have been one unbroken family, the home of peace, the abode of love. The fact that "God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth" would then have been a realized and established truth; no nationalities would have divided, or personal interests separated us. Having one common Father, one loving God, one blissful Paradise, our lives would have been one long heaven on earth of sweetly intermingled peace, love, joy, fellowship, and purity. One can hardly indulge a conception of such a happy world without an intense regret that the fall has made it all a dream—yet let us dream a moment of a world without a soldier, without sword, or spear, or shield; a world without a prison, a magistrate, or a chain; a society in which none will wrong his fellow, but each is anxious for the well-being of all; a race needing no exhortation to virtue, for virtue is its very life; a land where love has knit all natures into unity and breathed one soul into a thousand bodies! Alas! for us, when Adam fell he not only violated his Maker's laws, but in the fall he broke the unity of the race, and now we are isolated particles of manhood, instead of being what we should have been, members of one body, moved by one and the same spirit. The dream may vanish but we lose not our argument, for even in fallen humanity there are some palpitations of the one heart, some signs of the "one blood." Flesh and blood are able to make the revelation that we were not made to live unto ourselves. Fallen and debased as man is, and this pulpit is not prone to flatter human nature, yet we cannot; but recognize the generous feeling towards the poor and suffering which exists in many an unregenerate heart. We have known men who have forgotten God, but who, nevertheless, do not forget the poor; who despise their Maker's laws, but yet have a heart that melts at a tale of woe. It were folly to dispute that some who deny the God that made them, have yet exhibited bowels of compassion to the poor and needy. When even publicans and harlots can exhibit sympathy, how much more should it burn in the Christian heart; we should do more than others or else we shall hear the Master say, "What thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same." Called with a nobler calling, let us exhibit as the result of our regenerate nature a loftier compassion for the suffering sons of men. Many interesting incidents have been recorded by naturalists of sympathy among animals; the "dumb driven cattle" of our pastures, and the dogs of our streets have manifested commiseration towards a suffering one of their own species; and we are less than men, we are worse than brute beasts if we can enjoy abundance without sharing our bread with the starving, if we can be wrapt in comfort and refuse a garment to the shivering poor, or rest in our ceiled houses and yield no shelter to the homeless wanderer. Brethren, if nature herself teaches you wherefore should I say more, ye are not unnatural, ye achieve already more than mere nature can demand; you do the greater, you will not fail in the less.

2. Further, we may remark that the absence of sympathy has always been esteemed, in all countries, and in all ayes, one of the most abominable of vices. In old classic history who are the men held up to everlasting execration? Are they not those who had no mercy on the poor. Each land has its legend of the

proud noble who hoarded up his corn in the day of famine, and bade the perishing multitudes curse and die; and down to this day the name of such a wretch is quoted as a word of infamy. A man without a heart would be a beast more worthy of being hunted down than a tiger or a wolf. Men with little hearts and grasping ungenerous spirits, how heartily are they despised! If they wear the Christian garb they disgrace it; the ordinary disciples of morality are ashamed of them, and I may add that even vice and immorality shun their company. The grinding, hardhearted man may gain the approbation of those who are like himself, and therefore applaud him for his prudence and discretion, but the big heart of the world has ever been sound enough on this matter to understand that there is no genuine virtue without liberality, and that one of the most damning of all vices which stamps a man as being thoroughly rotten at the core, is that vice of selfishness which makes the wretch live and care only for his own personal aggrandizement, and offer only a stony heart to the woes of his fellows. Brethren, I entertain no fear that you will ever win the badge of infamy which hangs about the neck of churls.

3. But I have better arguments to use with you. Sympathy is especially a Christian's duty. Consider what the Christian is, and you will say that if every other man were selfish he should be disinterested; if there were nowhere else a heart that had sympathy for the needy there should be one found in every Christian breast. The Christian is a king; it becometh not a king to be meanly caring for himself. Was Alexander ever more royal than when his troops were suffering from thirst, and a soldier offered him a bowl full of the precious liquid, he put it aside, and said it was not fitting for a king to drink while his subjects were thirsty, and that he would share the sorrow with them? O ye; whom God has made kings and princes, reign royally over your own selfishness, and act with the honorable liberality which becomes the seed royal of the universe. You are sent into the world to be saviours of others, but how shall you be so if you care only for yourselves? It is yours to be lights, and doth not a light consume itself while it scatters its rays into the thick darkness? Is it not your office and privilege to have it said of you as of your Master—"He saved others, himself he cannot save?" The Christian's sympathy should ever be of the widest character, because he serves a God of infinite love. When the precious stone of love is thrown by grace into the crystal pool of a renewed heart it stirs the transparent life floods into ever widening circles of sympathy: the first ring has no very wide circumference; we love our own household; for he that careth not for his own household is worse than a heathen man and a publican: but mark the next concentric ring; we love the household of faith. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren:" look once more, for the ever-widening ring has reached the very limit of the lake, and included all men in its area, for "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks are to be made for all men."

If any man shall think that we are not "born for the universe" and should narrow our souls, I can only say that I have not so learned Christ, and hope never to confine to a few the sympathy which I believe to be meant for mankind. To me, a follower of Jesus means a friend of man. A Christian is a philanthropist by profession, and generous by force of grace; wide as the reign of sorrow is the stretch of his love, and where he cannot help he pities still.

4. Beloved, will you remember the blessed example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; for this, surely, will teach you not to live for self. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." His heart is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love. In all our afflictions he is afflicted. Since the day when he became flesh of our flesh, he hath never hidden himself from our sufferings. Our glorious Head is moved with all the sorrows which distress the members. Crowned though he now be, he forgets not the thorns which once he wore, amid the splendors of his regal state in Paradise he is not unmindful of his children here

below. Still is he persecuted when Saul persecutes the saints, still are his brethren as the apple of his eye, and very near his heart. If ye can find in Christ a grain of selfishness, consecrate yourselves unto your lusts, and let Mammon be your God. If ye can find in Christ a solitary atom of hardness of heart and callousness of spirit, then justify yourselves, ye viscose hearts are as stones to the wailing of the desolate. But if ye profess to be followers of the Man of Nazareth, be ye full of compassion; he feeds the hungry lest they faint by the way; he bindeth up the broken in heart and healeth all their wounds; he heareth the cry of the needy and precious shall their blood be his sight; therefore be ye also tenderhearted also very affectionate the one toward the other.

5. Dear friends, though this last reason will certainly be to a Christian heart the very best that can be urged, yet permit me to suggest another. Sympathy is essential to our usefulness. I know that a man in the ministry who cannot feel had much better resign his office. We have heard some hold forth the doctrines of grace, as if they were a nauseous medicine, and men were to be forced to drink thereof by hard words and violent abuse. We have always thought that such men did more hurt than good, for while seeking to vindicate the letter, they evidently missed the spirit of the faith once delivered unto the saints. Cold and impassive are some of our divines; they utter truth as though it were no concern of theirs whether men received it or no. To such men heaven and hell, death and eternity, are mere themes for oratory, but not subjects for emotion. The man who will do good must throw himself into his words; and put his whole being into intense communion which the truth which he utters. God's true minister cannot preach a sermon upon the ruin of man without feeling a deep amazement in his own spirit, because of the burden of the Lord. He cannot, on the other hand, unfold the joys of pardon and the love of Jesus without a leaping heart and rejoicing tongue. The man who is devoid of love will be devoid of power, for sympathies are golden chains by which Christian orators draw men's ears and hearts to themselves and the truths they teach. "I preached," said one, "when spake of condemnation as though I wore the chains about my own arm, and heard them clanking in my ears." "And I," another might have said, "I preached of pardon bought with blood, as though I had myself just come up from the sacred fountain, having left my foulness all behind, and being girt about with the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints." If our hearers perceive that we do not really long for their good, that our preaching is but a matter of mere routine to be got through as so much irksome "duty," can we hope to win their hearts? But when they feel that there is a roving heart within the preacher, then they give the more earnest heed to the things whereof we speak. You Sunday-school teachers, you must have warm hearts or you will be of little use to your children. You street-preachers, City missionaries, Bible women, and tract distributors, you who in any way seek to serve our Lord—a heart, a heart, a heart, a tender heart, a flaming heart, a heart saturated with intense sympathy, this, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, will give you success in your endeavors. Name the men the wide world over who have been the most successful in bending multitudes to their own will, and they are the men who have the largest hearts. For good or evil, heart-power is real power. The men whose hearts move with mighty pulsations like the piston-rod of a steam engine, will soon move the wheels and drag along the ponderous load. We must have within us the engine of the heart, throbbing mightily and continually, and then shall we draw the hearts of men with irresistible force.

6. Here I must supplement that thought with another; sympathy may often be the direct means of conversion. How do the Romanists craftily avail themselves of this! The loaves and fishes have always been used at Rome as an attraction to the multitude. Still the Sister of Mercy, with her basket on her arm, goes to the poor, or devotes herself to the sick—and in this we praise them; were it the gospel they had to teach, they could scarcely have found a wiser method for its propagation; and be it what it may which they have to disseminate, they certainly have not failed for lack of wisdom. I would that we who have a purer

faith, could remember a little more the intimate connection between the body and the soul. Go to the poor man and tell him of the bread of heaven, but first give him the bread of earth, for how shall he hear you with a starving body? Talk to him of the robe of Jesu's righteousness, but you will do it all the better when you have provided a garment with which he may cover his nakedness. It seems an idle tale to a poor man if you talk to him of spiritual things and cruelly refuse him help as to temporals. Sympathy, thus expressed, may be a mighty instrument for good; and even without this, if you be too poor to be able to carry out the pecuniary part of benevolence, a kind word, a look, a sentence or two of sympathy in trouble, a little loving advice, or an exhortation to your neighbor to cast his burden on the Lord, may do much spiritual service. I do not know, but I think if all our Church-members were full of love, and would always deal kindly, there would be very few hearts that would long hold out, at least from hearing the Word. You ask a person to hear your preacher; but he knows that you are crotchety, short-tempered, illiberal, and he is not likely to think much of the Word which, as he thinks, has made you what you are; but if, on the other hand, he sees your compassionate spirit, he will first be attracted to you, then next to what you have to say, and then you may lead him as with a thread, and bring him to listen to the truth as it is in Jesus, and who can tell but thus, through the sympathy of your tender heart, you may be the means of bringing him to Christ.

7. And I shall say here, that this sympathy is sure to be a great blessing to yourselves. If you want joy—joy that you may think upon at nights, and live upon day after day, next to the joy of the Lord, which is our strength, is the joy of doing good. The selfish man thinks that he has the most enjoyment in laying out his wealth upon himself. Poor fool! his interest is vastly small compared with the immense return which generosity, and liberality, and sympathy bring to the man who exercises them. Be ye assured that we can know as much joy in another's joy as in our own joy. Then, beside the joy it brings, there is experience. Experimental knowledge may be gained by it. I would not, of course, aver that a man can get experience without having trouble himself, but the next best thing to it, is to bear other people's troubles. We may never have known what it is to want bread, but to see a saint who has been brought to the door of starvation, and yet has had his bread given and his water sure, may be almost as useful. You and I may not be tortured with the pangs of sickness or the weakness of decay, but to climb some three pairs of stairs to a miserable back room, and to see a child of God patient in his tribulation, and to put ourselves by sympathy upon his bed, and suffer and smart with him, may give us the next best thing to the experience itself. I do think, brethren, that some men may live twenty lives, and get the experience of twenty men, and the information and real good of twenty men's troubles, by having large hearts which can hold the sorrows of others. Oh! we cannot tell how much blessedness we might receive if we were more free to aid our fellows. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Ask any man who has been to visit the sick, the poor, and the needy, whether he has not come home more resigned to his own trials, and more satisfied with his own lot. We gave a shilling, and received a casket of pearls, which dropped from the lips of the poor suffering-one while he told of God's faithfulness, and the preciousness of the love of Christ. We are great losers when we know not these rich poor saints. If we would but trade with them 'twere a blessed barter for us. Coral and pearl—let no mention be made of them in comparison with the priceless gems which we might receive if we had greater sympathy and fuller communion with the suffering sons and daughters of Jerusalem.

Thus have I said as much as may be fitting this morning in commendation of Christian sympathy.

II. We speak now of THE HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

Some say that there is very little Christian sympathy abroad. I do not believe them, except as regards themselves. I dare say they have measured other men's corn with their own bushels. When any say, "O,

there is no love in the Church," I have always noticed that, without exception, they have no love themselves. On the other hand, we have heard others say, "What a blessed unity there is in the Church; when we come to the Tabernacle it does us good to get such hearty shakes of the hand, and to see such love in every brother's eye." When they speak thus, I know the reason is that they carry fire in their own hearts, and then they think the Church warm, while the others carry lumps of ice in their hearts, and then they imagine that everybody must be cold.

1. One of the great impediments to Christian sympathy is our own intense selfishness. We are all selfish by nature, and it is a work of grace to break this thoroughly down, until we live to Christ, and not to self any longer. How often is the rich man tempted to think that his riches are his own. A certain lady being accosted by a beggar, who asked charity of her; she gave him a shilling, saying, "Take that shilling; it is more than God ever gave me." The beggar said, "O, Madam, but God has given you all your abundance." "Nay," said she, "but I am right; God has only lent me what I have; all I have is a loan." I would that all who are entrusted with this world's substance felt that it was only loaned out to them, and that they were stewards. Now, a steward, when he has orders to give a poor man a large sum of money, does not say, "Dear me, that will make me poor!" He never considered that which was entrusted to him belonged to him, and so he gives it freely enough. So, remember, you have nothing of your own; specially you Christian men, who have been bought with a price, you are in a double sense stewards unto God, and should act as such; living to God, we should devote ourselves to the good of the race for Jesus' sake.

2. Another hindrance lies in the customs of our country. We still have amongst us too much of caste and custom. The exclusiveness of rank is not readily overcome. It is not so, I thank God, in this place of worship, but I have known many places of worship where there are tiers of Christian people, layer on layer, who never associate with each other. In some places of worship they put up in conspicuous letters, "FREE SEATS FOR THE POOR." I do abominate that! Then you have another class—respectable tradesmen, but though they sit at the same table with the dons, and my lord this or that, they never think for a moment of speaking to them. When people come out of Church, what a gradation there is! Have I not seen in many a country village how, first of all, the squire goes out, and then the bailiff follows, and then all the poor people curtsy and bow to show their abject servitude and serfdom. And all this in a Christian land! In our Dissenting places of worship what stiffness there is; what rustling of the silks up one aisle, and what quietude of the cottons in another! When the members come together Lady So-and-so, who sits yonder, or Miss This, who sits there, will hardly recognize Nancy That, or Betsy So-and-so? Now I feel as much pleased in associating with the poorest of God's saints as with those who are of a higher degree in this world, for I believe the happy fusion of all will promote the interests of all. It would vex my heart to see you grow into the stuck-up respectability of some of our fine congregations. Away for ever with these castes and divisions; let us maintain the family feeling, and suffer nothing to violate it.

3. Much want of sympathy is produced by our ignorance of one another. We do not know the sufferings of our fellows. If I had brought the newspaper here to-day, and I had half a mind to do so, and had read you some extracts about the sufferings in Preston, and Wigan, and the various towns in Lancashire, you would have known much more about the distress than you do now. Or if, which would do as well, you were to go next Monday with some City missionary to the least East end, or St. Giles's, or some poor district this side the water you would say, "Dear me, I did not know that people really did suffer at this rate; I had no idea of it or I would have given more to the poor." We want to be educated into the knowledge of our national poverty; we want to be taught and trained, to know more of what our fellow-men can and do suffer. Oh! if the Christian Church knew the immorality of London, she would cry aloud to God. If but for one night you

could see the harlotry and infamy, if you could but once see the rascality of London gathered into one mass, your hearts would melt with woe and bitterness, and you would bow yourselves before God and cry unto him for this city as one that mourneth for his only son, even for his firstborn.

4. No doubt the abounding deception which exists among those who seek our help has checked much liberality. I think I can tell the moment a man opens his mouth to address me, when a man wants to beg of me. There is such a particular whine and a sanctified unction, that the moment you hear it, you think, "I will give that man nothing; he is an old established beggar, and gets his living by it." Seeing, as I have done, not scores, but hundreds of these beings, there is a tendency to get one's heart hard and callous, and to say "Oh! they are all deceivers." But they are not all such; there is a vast amount of real distress of a private character, a suffering which will not cry nor moan; and I take it that it ought to be your business and mine to seek out these cases; not to stop till they come to us, but to go to them, avoiding ever, with a stern discretion, those ill cases which do but prey upon Christian charity, but seeking out the genuine sufferers, and giving them relief. Let none of these things, great obstacles though they be, hinder your sympathy to-day, for none of them exist in the case which we shall have to plead this morning.

III. A few minutes upon THE FRUITS OF CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY.

1. The fruit of Christian sympathy will be seen in a kindly association with all Christians: we shall not shun them nor pass them by.

2. It will be seen next, in a kindly encouragement of those who want aid, constantly being ready to give a word of good advice, and good cheer to the heart which is ready to faint. Dear Christian friends, I think our experience is not so available as it might be for the good of others. In the olden times they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard. You will find your brethren often distressed in mind; you have passed through the same stage; conversation with them will help them to escape as you have done. More especially is this conversation very valuable under the pangs of conviction. When a young man or woman has been awakened under the ministry, I charge you each before God, you that have found peace in Christ, to watch the throes and agonies of the new birth, and be at hand to take the little child and nurse it for Christ. The senior members of every Christian Church should consider themselves, as called by their very position to look after the young. We have some such here; we want a few more. We want you mothers in Israel, especially, to be so sympathetic that you may no sooner hear that a soul is in distress than you are in distress too till you can have poured in the oil and the wine into their wounds. I think this sympathy should be especially shown to any that backslide. There is a tendency to cut such off from the Church-book and then leave them. This should not be; we must look after that which is out of the way. The shepherd must leave the ninety and nine sheep to go after the one which has gone astray. If you see one vacillating be most careful there. If you detect in any a growing coldness, be the more anxious to foster that which remains, which is ready to die. Let a holy discipline and watchfulness be maintained over the entire Church, by the care and forethought of every one for his next friend. Thus can you practically allow your Christian sympathy.

3. Show it, also, whenever you hear the good name of any called into doubt. Stand up for your brethren. 'Tis an ill bird that fouls its own nest, but there are some such birds. The moment they hear a word or a whisper against a Christian man, though a member of the same Church, "Report it, report it" say they; always pretending that they are very sorry, but all the while sucking it as a dainty morsel. The old proverb, you know, was, "We have done dinner; clear the things away, and now let us sit down and crack other men's characters." I fear me there are even some professing Christians who do that. This is not sympathy

but the malice of Satan: may God deliver you from it! Stand up for all that are your fellow-soldiers: be jealous of the honor of the regiment in which you have enlisted.

4. But still there is no Christian sympathy in all this if it does not when needed, prove itself by real gifts of our substance. Zealous words will not warm the cold; delicate words will not feed the hungry; the freest speech will not set free the captive, or visit him in prison; the most adorned words will not clothe the naked, and the words that are most full of unction will not pour oil and wine into the wounds of the sick. Words! Words! Words! Chaff! Chaff!! Chaff!!! If there be no act there is no sympathy. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Perhaps some of my hearers this morning will say that the text and the subject are appropriate to the occasion, but that they want some spiritual food. Well, you get that often, I trust, here; but I am persuaded that there are times when, if Christ were upon earth, he would dwell mainly upon these themes of practical Christianity. I read my Master's Sermon on the Mount, and what doctrine is there in it? It is all precept from beginning to end; and so shall my sermon be this morning; not doctrine, but precept; for this I know, we want to see in the Christian world more of the practical carrying out of the loving benevolence of the Savior. What care I about the doctrines for which you fight, unless they produce in you the spirit of Christ? What care I for your forms of faith and your ceremonies, if all the while you are a Nabal, wickedly saying in your heart, "Shall I take my bread and my water to give it unto these strangers?" Oh! let your faith be a living faith, lest, while you have the form of godliness, you deny the power thereof. Time was when, wherever a man met a Christian he met a helper. "I shall starve!" said he, until he saw a Christian's face, and then he said, "Now shall I be aided." But some have thrown benevolence aside, and imagine that these are old duties of a legal character. Legal, then, will I be, when, in my Master's name, again I say, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

IV. I now conclude with an appeal for the special object of the collection this morning. I ASK YOUR AID FOR THESE NEEDY ONES IN LANCASHIRE.

1. Remember, first, that their poverty is no fault of their own. They are not brought to it by excess of meats or drinks. They are not reduced to it by riot or disorder. It is not idleness; it is not a wilful strike against the masters. It is utterly unavoidable; and here, therefore, is the right place for benevolence to display itself. The Egyptian hieroglyph for charity is very suggestive. It is a naked child giving honey to a bee which has lost its wings. Notice, it is a child: we should give in meekness. It is a naked child: we should give from pure motives, and not for show. It is a child feeding a bee; not a drone, but one that will work; a bee that has lost its wings; one, therefore, which has lost its power to supply itself: a picture before you of those martyrs and confessors of industry whose cause I plead to-day. A bee that has lost its wings makes its appeal for a little honey to every childlike heart here today, and they who are true to God will not refuse it their aid.

2. Remember, too, that the cause of this suffering is a national sin—the sin of slavery. We have not yet passed the third generation, and upon a nation God visits sin to the third and fourth generation. We have rid ourselves, at last, of this accursed stain so far as our present Government is concerned, we are therefore delivered from any fear in future on that ground; but still, if slavery be now in America, we must remember that it would not have been there if it had not been carried there, and we are partners in guilt. Moreover, there has been too much winking at slavery amongst the merchants of Manchester and Liverpool. There has not been that abhorrence of the evil which should have been, and therefore it is just

in the Providence of God that when America is cut with the sword we should be made to smart with the rod. If the Lord is pleased to smite our nation in one particular place, yet we must remember that it is meant for us all. Let us all bear the infliction as our tribulation, and let us cheerfully take up the burden, for it is but a little one compared with what our sins might have brought upon us. Better far for us to have famine than war. From all civil war and all the desperate wickedness which it involves, good Lord deliver us; and if thou smitest us as thou hast done, it is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man.

3. I must also refresh your memories, though you know it well, with the fact of the patient endurance of those who have been called to suffer. You have read of no burning of mills, no breaking open of baker's shops. You have heard no accusations brought against the aristocracy; you have heard of no great political movement for the upsetting of our institutions. There was never upon earth a nobler spectacle than that of these men suffering so Frightfully with their wives and children, and yet enduring it so patiently. They deserve to be helped. If ever there was a case in which human ears must be opened to hear the cry of woe, this is it. If you and I had our wives and children at home starving, and had nothing but the charity of the parish and the little relief of the committees, making only some one-and-fourpence or one-and-sixpence a head to live upon for a week, I am afraid we should begin to think that we could re-adjust the machinery of Government; or it might happen that if we saw bread and could not get it we might break the window, or do some unrighteous act to take away another man's property sooner than see our children starve. They suffer well; they suffer well, brethren; and we do not well unless we help them.

4. Moreover, remember how widely spread is this distress. I know too many of my dear hearers are often brought to as great poverty as the operatives in Lancashire, but then you have some little help; sometimes the Church can give it; at other times some friend, not quite so badly off as you are, will help you. But there, if a poor man wants a loaf, he cannot get it of the tradesman even on credit, for the tradesman has no power to give him credit. Nor can these people borrow of their neighbors, for where all are equally destitute one cannot help another. Even the Churches fail to do what they would wish to do. In the case of one dear brother, late a student in our college, to whom we constantly send supplies week by week, and who maintains a class of some forty young women, and in answer to the cry of faith has found all the means, I hope to aid him by this collection of to-day. The distress is not only with the poor now, but with those a little above them, and God only knoweth to what extent it must go unless in his gracious Providence he by some means or other, bringeth a supply of cotton that they may once again be at work.

5. Wherefore need I urge you, my hearers? I feel that you are ready now to assist these suffering ones. Let your own gratitude to God move you. Blessed be God that you have not this famine and straitness of bread. Thank the Master that though times may be hard, and some may now and then complain, yet we have not to walk through our streets and see our factories shut up, and miss the smoke which marks the daily toil that brings food to hungry mouths. We have not to know every habitation is a Bochim because the strong man boweth down for lack of bread, and the faces of the children are wan, and the mothers weep, and even the breasts refuse the infant child its needed nourishment. Give as God has prospered you. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord shall remember him in the time of trouble. He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ hath everlasting life freely given him; let him, therefore, freely give, even as he hath Freely received.

* This refers to a cotton famine that had devastated Lancashire. The cause of the famine was, curiously enough, the American Civil War. Cotton shipments from the American South had been blockaded by Union forces, thus effectively putting the cotton mills in Lancashire out of business. The results were

far-reaching and disastrous for the cotton manufacturing district of England.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/christian-sympathy/>

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